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Gifts for your favorite cook

JANUARY 2002 NO. 48

fine COOKING

FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO COOK

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hens for easy
entertaining**

**Roasted winter
vegetables**

**Three quick
chicken dinners**

**Crisp mocha
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1	package (18.25 ounces) yellow cake mix
1	cup water
1/4	cup vegetable oil
3	eggs

1. Sprinkle brown sugar over bottom of microwave-safe 10-inch round cake pan or 9" x 13" baking dish; dot with butter. Microwave* at Power Level 10 (100% power) for 1½ minutes. Evenly distribute mixture; arrange pineapple rings in single layer over mixture and place a cherry in each ring.
2. Combine cake mix, water, oil, and eggs. Beat well, spoon batter into pan and microwave* at Power Level 7 (70% power) for 14 to 16 minutes.
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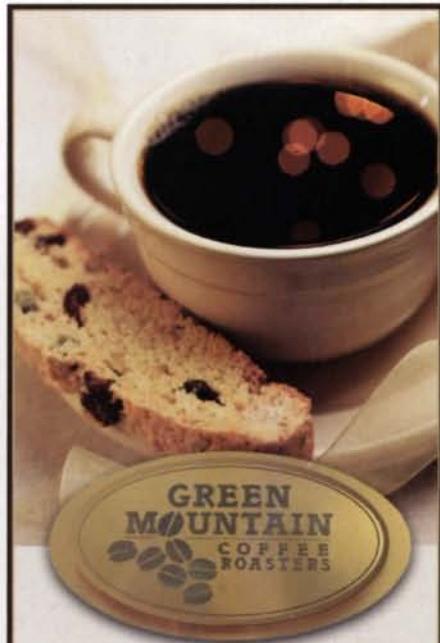


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Cover photo, and these pages: Scott Phillips.

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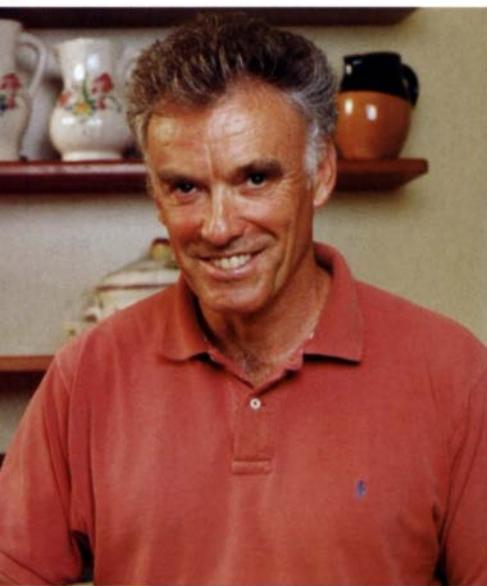
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Jean-Pierre Mouillé ("Cassoulet," p. 86) was the executive chef at *Chez Panisse* in Berkeley, California, for more than twenty years, where his countless recipes, knowledge, and sensibilities about cooking seasonally and with the finest local ingredients have left an indelible mark on that restaurant, as well as on the way we eat and cook in this country. Jean-Pierre was a contributor to the *Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook* and the *Chez Panisse Café Cookbook*. These days, he does restaurant consulting worldwide and spends much of the year in France, where he and his wife, Denise, lead culinary and cultural tours of Bordeaux and southwestern France especially geared to Americans (www.twobordelais.com).

Joanne Weir ("Cornish Hens," p. 44) is the author of many cookbooks, including her two latest, *Weir Cooking in the Wine Country* and *Joanne Weir's More Cooking in the Wine Country*, companions to her public television series, "Weir Cooking in the Wine Country," now in its second season. Joanne lives in San Francisco.



Martha Holmberg ("Rösti Potatoes," p. 50) studied cooking at La Varenne cooking school in Paris. After graduating, she remained in Paris and practiced flipping röstis while she worked as a private chef to an Austrian diplomatic family. She is the editor-in-chief of *Fine Cooking*.



Molly Stevens ("Root Vegetables," p. 53), a contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*, has lots to say about root vegetables, having recently completed *One Potato, Two Potato*, a cookbook she co-wrote with Roy Finamore. "Even after cooking countless potato dishes, my appetite for them hasn't waned—on the contrary, I love them more than ever," she says. Molly lives in Vermont, where the long

winters give her plenty of opportunity to cook all kinds of soul-warming food.

Lisa Zwirn ("Creating Your Own Quick Recipes," p. 58), started writing quick recipes for *The Boston Globe*'s food section over a year ago. It was the perfect assignment for the self-taught cook, whose most dog-eared cookbook is Pierre Franey's *60-Minute Gourmet*. Lisa, who grew up watching Julia Child on television with her mother, isn't just interested in quick cooking, though. She's written about foods as varied as wasabi, honey, apples, fennel, grown-up cookies, and after-dinner cheese courses both for the *Globe* and for magazines such as *Pastry Art & Design* and *Chile Pepper*.

Barbara Witt ("Savory Roasted Nuts," p. 62) is the former owner and executive chef of a nationally acclaimed Washington, D.C., restaurant, a private chef, and the author of several cookbooks, including *Great Food Without Fuss*, which won a James Beard award.



and in the test kitchens of *Saveur* magazine before moving to Healdsburg, California,

where she works as a recipe tester and food writer.

Lauren Groveman ("French Bread Rolls," p. 68) considers herself first and foremost a private cooking and baking teacher, but she keeps busy with plenty of side projects. In addition to writing cookbooks (*Lauren Groveman's Kitchen: Nurturing Food for Family & Friends*, plus an as-yet untitled one in the works), Lauren is the host of two television shows ("Home Cooking with Lauren Groveman" on public

television and "Welcome to Lauren Groveman's Kitchen" on local Westchester, New York, stations) and a weekly radio show (Food, Family, and Home "Matters"), for which she won a 2001 James Beard Foundation Award for Best Radio on Food, Long Form. She lives in Larchmont, New York.

When people told **Annie Giammietti** ("Mocha Chocolate-Chip Cookies," p. 74) that her cookies were so good she should sell them, she did. For many years, she supplemented her income as a graphic artist by selling baskets of her homemade Christmas cookies. Now the associate art director of this magazine as well as a busy mom, Annie has no time to bake professionally. Fortunately for the staff of *Fine Cooking*, she still likes to do it for fun.



Randall Price ("Chocolate Soufflé Cake," p. 86) was working as a chef in Ohio when a chocolate cake changed his life: He entered a *Chocolatier* recipe contest, won a pastry course at La Varenne in Paris, and from there launched a career in Europe as a chef, caterer, and teacher, including several years as chef to the United States ambassador to Hungary. Randall currently consults and teaches at La Varenne's Château du Fey and cooks for private clients in Paris and the Auvergne.

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Fine Cooking's editorial staff (from left): Martha Holmberg, Steve Hunter, Jennifer Armentrout, Sarah Jay, Li Agen, Amy Albert, Annie Giamattei, Kim Landi, and Susie Middleton.

FROM THE EDITOR

New space, in our kitchen and in cyberspace

In my letter in the last issue, I told you about our kitchen renovation plans and promised a picture of the new spaces. The staff thought I was jinxing the project by predicting that it would be ready to photograph for this issue, but I had faith, and we made it—just barely. We took the picture at left literally hours before we went to press (thank you, digital photography). As you can see, we're not totally installed, but in another few days we'll be ready to anoint the new spaces (there's another kitchen next door) with some spattered chicken grease and spilled spices as we begin another year of making our recipes as foolproof as we can so that you'll have excellent experiences in your own kitchens.

Our web site has just undergone a renovation too, with an all-new look, easier navigation, and a site-wide search function. In addition to some

of our best articles and recipes from past issues, you'll find new food features, fun videos, and of course our discussion forum, Cooks Talk. For those of you who haven't visited Cooks Talk yet, you should give it a try, even if just to read a few threads. You'll pick up valuable information from other cooks of all levels, as well as opinions galore (the Cooks Talk folks are not shy) on favorite recipes, effective techniques, good cookbooks, equipment choices, and kitchen design. Add your voice to the conversation.

We want to hear from you on a few other topics, too. What do you love most about your kitchen? Send us a description and a photo of the features that you find the most helpful, fun, or unique about your workspace for our Kitchen Details column.

And how about those chickens from our October/November issue ("Three Methods for Great Roast Chicken," p. 52). Have you had a chance to try some of them? Which chef had the best technique, in your opinion? If you don't have that issue, the three recipes are posted on our web site for your (Continued on p. 12)

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Fine Cooking: (ISSN: 1072-5121) is published bimonthly by The Taunton Press, Inc., Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Telephone (203) 426-8171. Periodicals postage paid at Newtown, CT 06470 and at additional mailing offices. GST paid registration #123210981. U.S. distribution by Curtis Circulation Company, 730 River Road, New Milford, NJ 07646-3048 and Eastern News Distributors, Inc., One Media Way, 12406 Route 250, Milan, OH 44846-9705.

Subscription Rates: U.S. and Canada, \$29.95 for one year, \$49.95 for two years, \$69.95 for three years (GST included, payable in U.S. funds). Outside the U.S./Canada: \$36 for one year, \$62 for two years, \$88 for three years (payable in U.S. funds). Single copy, \$5.95. Single copy outside the U.S., \$6.95.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Fine Cooking*, The Taunton Press, Inc., 63 South Main St., P.O. Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

Printed in the USA.

HOW TO CONTACT US:

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www.finecooking.com

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FROM THE EDITOR-continued

convenience. Write, fax, or e-mail us your vote (our addresses are all on p. 11.)

And since I do like to offer previews of coming attractions, I want to alert you to some good things coming your way over the next few issues. Starting with the February/March issue, we'll be including a special expanded Quick & Delicious section, with six to eight recipes for from-scratch dishes that you can make when you're too busy to spend a long time cooking. Later in the year, you'll see some design changes to the magazine that will make our information more accessible and exciting. Stay tuned for details.

—Martha Holmberg,
editor-in-chief

fine COOKING ...around the country

November 12–23, 2001: Fine Cooking contributing editor Abby Dodge appears on "Entertaining for the Holidays with Emme" on the TV Food Network. Check www.finecooking.com or www.entertainingfortheholidays.com for air times.

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Plus: If you're in the Southwest, tune into Jennifer Bushman's "Nothing to It" television program to see demonstrations of recipes from the pages of Fine Cooking. The show airs on selected NBC and Fox stations in Nevada, Arizona, Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. Check local listings for times.

She takes a recipe and runs with it

I love your magazine, and the article about grilling pork chops in *Fine Cooking* #46 (p. 40) has made me a true believer! I brined the chops, used the dry rub and created a delicious meal (thanks to your great tips and techniques). I served the chops with some Thai red rice, steamed carrots and broccoli—what a hit! As I do not have a grill, I improvised by searing the chops first, and then popping them into a very hot oven to finish them off. In the meantime, I made use of the caramelized bits in the frying pan by sautéing some mushrooms, adding some white wine, and a fresh chopped fig (yellow). I reduced this by about half and added a pat of butter, a few cranks of pepper, and a dash of salt—yummy. Thanks again for making me look so good.

—Rhea Gazer, Toronto, Ontario

Right pan, wrong reason

I am a long-time subscriber and enjoy *Fine Cooking* magazine very much. I was, however, disappointed in Abigail Johnson Dodge's recent article on searing steaks. While I agree that cast iron is definitely the best material for the job, I cannot agree with her reason. She states twice in this article that cast-iron skillets are "great conductors of heat." They are in fact rather poor conductors, and that is the reason they work so well for searing steaks. Cast iron heats very slowly and loses its heat very slowly due to this poor conductivity. This retention of heat helps maintain the high temperature even when a cool steak hits the pan, thus providing the wonderful sear you get from cast iron.

—A. Torgerson, Golden, CO

Share my no-roll, no-fail pie crust

I read the inquiry from Vivian Marks regarding the substitution of margarine for butter in your fruit pie crust recipe. I would like to share an unusual, no-fail pie crust recipe that I often use. It works well for all open-top pies and fruit tarts, although it might take some experimenting to devise a way to use it as a top crust as well (pat it between sheets of plastic wrap or waxed paper, for instance?). The reason for the slight imprecision in the milk measurement is to take into ac-



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count the type of flour used and the humidity of the day.

No-Roll Pie Crust

1½ cups unbleached flour (I always use Ceresota)

½ cup Mazola margarine

1 to 2 Tbs. sugar

2 to 3 Tbs. milk

Pinch of salt

Put the flour in the 9-inch pie plate you intend to use. Add the other ingredients and cut together with a fork until the dough forms. Pat it into place, flute the edges, refrigerate it for 10 to 15 min. The crust can be pricked and blind-baked or filled and baked.

I enjoy your magazine a great deal, especially the format and abundant photographs with the focus clearly on the food.

—Penny Prosperi, via e-mail

Can you tone down the fat?

I have subscribed to *Fine Cooking* since your first issue and have had many years of cooking pleasure from the magazine. But I am using your recipes less and less because I do not wish to cook with so much fat. I don't know if I have become more sensitive to fat quantities or if your

recipes generally are higher in fat than they used to be. I wonder if you could suggest ways in the text that accompanies your main-course recipes to reduce some of the fat. I often find myself wondering why the recipes require so much oil or butter. What is the purpose? I greatly enjoy reading about techniques and equipment and enjoy your suggestions for various combinations of ingredients.

—Meredith Kusch, via e-mail

Editors' reply: Unfortunately, fat is a great flavor carrier and releaser, and because *Fine Cooking* recipes have always had full flavor as a high priority, we often do include oils and butter (and in this issue, duck fat!) as a cooking medium or an enrichment to a dish. We're aware, however, that many people do watch their fat intake, so we're going to make more of an effort in the future to offer modifications to recipes when it's possible to do so without ruining the integrity of the recipe (so forget about low-fat cassoulet, for example, but look at the chicken dishes on pp. 60-61, which offer a lot of flavor without a lot of fat). Look for notes in upcoming

recipes, and in a few issues, we'll be introducing a new department from our test kitchen in which we'll often talk about lower-fat options.

Who needs recipes?

Please add my vote for more "Cooking without Recipes" articles. Serendipity led me to *Fine Cooking* #43 and, consequently, the ability to dazzle friends and family with on-the-spot epicurean experiences sans recipe. Now I've committed myself to a three-year subscription in anticipation of additional secrets to simply *Fine Cooking*.

—Lilyan Maski, Alameda, CA

Crying for my mother's beans

This morning, while at my favorite grocery store, I picked up *Fine Cooking*, which I read religiously—it's my cooking bible. I would never think of criticizing one of your recipes...taste is such a personal thing. However, I admire one of your readers who had the nerve to do it. Frank L. Duley's e-mail in *Fine Cooking* #47 (p. 12) was right to the point. Boston Baked Beans were also a sacred tradition in my family of eleven children. My mother would prepare them on Saturday afternoon for the Sunday breakfast. The beans would cook all night in a big black cast-iron pot on the wood-burning stove. Frank's grandmother and my mother must have been the best cooks in the world. Once in a while, in a moment of nostalgia, I cry for my mother's cooking. Her baked beans, her *tourtieres*, her meat pies...Every time I see a printed recipe for these traditional French-Canadian dishes, I want to scream, "No, no, you've got it all wrong." You want to bake and taste the real thing? Ask me; I will be happy to share my recipes. Born and raised in northern Quebec, where for the majority of French Canadians, salt and pepper were the only condiments, I was sixteen when I discovered garlic and mushrooms and a whole lot of new foods. Now, there's not one herb, spice, vegetable, that I don't know about. But believe me—we knew what good food was even back then. And now, it is with tears in my eyes that I say, "Oh, Mom, how I miss your baked beans and your sugar pies!"

—Marcelle Noble, Burlington, Ontario ♦

Getting the most from *Fine Cooking's* recipes

When you cook from a *Fine Cooking* recipe, we want you to get as good a result as we did in our test kitchen, so we recommend that you follow the guidelines below in addition to the recipe instructions.

Before you start to cook, read the recipe completely. Gather the ingredients and prepare them as directed in the recipe list before proceeding to the method. Give your oven plenty of time to heat up; use an oven thermometer to check.

Always start checking for doneness a few min-

utes before the time given in the recipe; use an instant-read thermometer.

In baking recipes especially, the amounts of some ingredients (flour, butter, nuts, etc.) are listed by weight (pounds, ounces) and by volume (cups, tablespoons). Professional bakers measure by weight for consistent results, but we list volume measures too because not many home cooks have scales (although we highly recommend them—see *Fine Cooking* #13, p. 68, and #17, p. 62).

To measure flour by volume, stir the flour and then lightly spoon it into a dry measure and level it with a knife; don't shake or tap the cup. Measure liquids in glass or plastic liquid measuring cups.

Unless otherwise noted, assume that

- ◆ Butter is unsalted.
- ◆ Eggs are large (about 2 ounces each).
- ◆ Flour is all-purpose (don't sift unless directed to).
- ◆ Sugar is granulated.
- ◆ Garlic, onions, and fresh ginger are peeled.
- ◆ Fresh herbs, greens, and lettuces are washed and dried.



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AT THE MARKET

BY AMY ALBERT



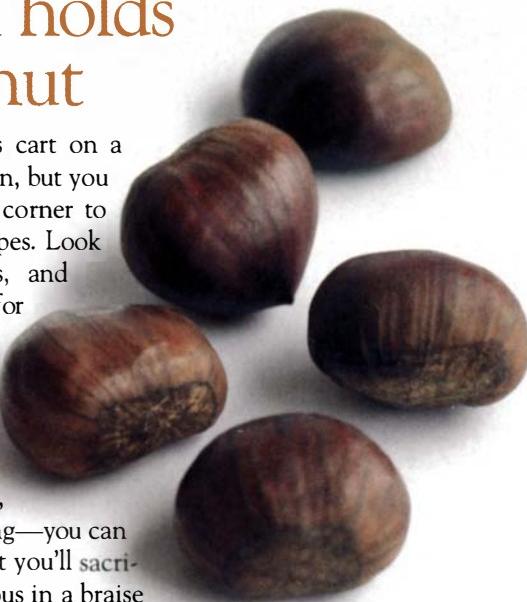
Cook kale thoroughly

Kale, like the Red Russian variety pictured here, is most tender and flavorful in cooler months and has much better flavor after a frost. Look for firm, fresh leaves; pass on those that are flaccid or yellowy. Whether you steam, braise, or blanch and then sauté kale, know that it needs thorough cooking: Unlike delicate greens that are ready to eat when heat sets in, kale will be unpleasantly chewy if only barely cooked. Red Russian and Black kale (also called Lacinato or Tuscan kale) are more tender and need less cooking time, while the frillier blue-green varieties are harder and take longer. Even when fully cooked, kale will be chewy, but pleasantly so. Its flavor and texture benefit from sautéing a few aromatics in the pan first; I especially like pancetta and onion, as in the recipe at right.

A glossy shell holds a moist chestnut

The aroma of a chestnut roaster's cart on a winter day is a sure sign of the season, but you needn't stand on a blustery street corner to get them—buy some to use in recipes. Look for glossy shells with no bruises, and choose chestnuts that feel heavy for their size (those that don't are probably dry and shriveled; buy a bit extra to account for shriveled ones, just in case).

To be used in cooking, chestnuts need a preliminary blanching, and their stubborn skins need peeling—you can buy them already peeled in a jar, but you'll sacrifice freshness. Chestnuts are delicious in a braise of red cabbage, in any kind of stuffing for game birds, or stirred into rice pilaf. And they're great with lobster: Nathan Coons, chef at the Old Anglers Inn in Potomac, Maryland, puts them to delicious use in a lobster *ragout*.



Braised Kale with Pancetta

It always amazes me how much a huge bunch of kale shrinks during cooking. This recipe is especially good with the tender Red Russian variety pictured at left. A squeeze of lemon makes a good finish. *Serves two generously.*

2 Tbs. olive oil
**1/4-inch slice pancetta, diced
(about 1/4 cup)**
1 small onion, chopped
Pinch dried red chile flakes
**1 1/2 lb. kale, stemmed, leaves
roughly torn**
**1 1/2 cups homemade or low-
salt canned chicken broth**
1 small clove garlic, minced
**Freshly ground black pepper
to taste**

In a large, heavy saucepan or Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the pancetta, onion, and red chile flakes; sauté until the onion is deep golden, about 5 min. Add the kale; toss with tongs to coat the leaves with oil. Add the chicken broth and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce the heat to medium low, and simmer until the leaves are quite tender, about 10 min. (thicker-leaved varieties will need longer, so do check the pan, adding water or broth if needed, and taste a leaf). Stir in the minced garlic, raise the heat to high, and boil uncovered until the pan is dry. Season with a few grinds of pepper (you probably won't need salt) and serve.

Caviar is a holiday tradition

Caviar is sold almost year-round, but being a bit of an extravagance, it has come to signify holiday time. The combination of buttery, sea-spray flavors and creamy, pop-in-your mouth texture is what makes caviar so sought-after. Though the deep, cold waters of the Caspian Sea have long been the world's primary source, American waters produce both farmed and wild caviar that's quite good. Look for fresh caviar (always sold in a refrigerator case); avoid the pasteurized, shelf-stabilized, unchilled stuff, which is overly salty (and likely the reason some say they don't like caviar). Beluga, osetra, and sevruga refer to the



type of sturgeon from which the eggs come, beluga being the rarest and most expensive (though not necessarily the tastiest). Prices range widely, from about \$50 for two ounces of wild American caviar to over \$100 an ounce for wild Caspian beluga.

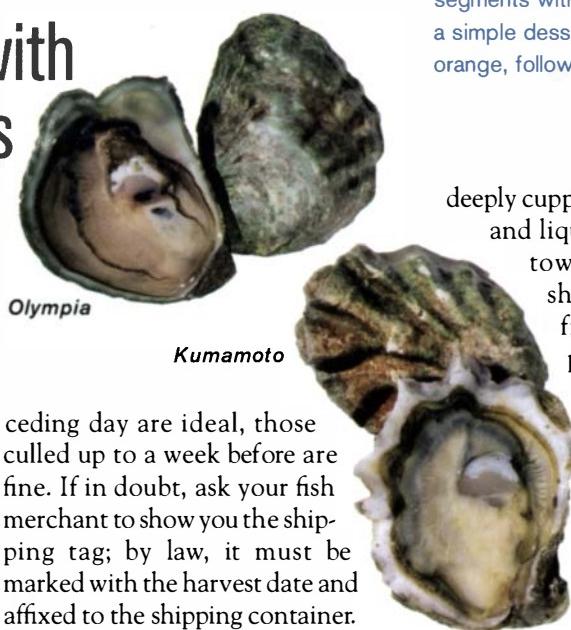
When serving, use a glass, bone, or mother-of-pearl spoon (\$8 and up in gourmet shops). Even a plastic spoon is preferable to metal, which reacts with the caviar to impart metallic flavors.

Good caviar needs no embellishment and is best served simply: It's lovely on white toast with a glass of crisp, tart sparkling wine.

Choose oysters with tightly shut shells

Oysters are sold year-round, but they're firmest and sweetest from November to May, says Jon Rowley, a seafood consultant from Seattle (summer is spawning time, when oysters are softer and not as sweet).

Oysters come from all over the country, "anywhere the ocean is clean and cold," says Rowley. Kumamoto, Olympia, Belon, and Malpeque are just a few varieties you may run across. At the market, look for oysters that feel heavy in the hand, with shells that are shut tight—a good sign that there's a fresh, juicy oyster inside. Don't eat any open oysters, even if they shut after being nudged, cautions Rowley. While oysters harvested the pre-



ceding day are ideal, those culled up to a week before are fine. If in doubt, ask your fish merchant to show you the shipping tag; by law, it must be marked with the harvest date and affixed to the shipping container.

Once you hustle your oysters home, don't put them in ice, but do stash them in the refrigerator. Arrange each oyster so that its convex side faces down (the more



A heavy orange is a good orange

Oranges are available year-round, but in winter they're a welcome bright spot.

Choose fruit that feels heavy for its size. Skin color isn't a reliable sign of ripeness: In some states (Florida, for one), dyeing oranges is legal; in Arizona and in California, it isn't. Surprisingly, an orange with a greenish cast may be sweeter and riper than one that's uniformly orange, its skin having started to turn green if the ripe fruit hung on the tree along with the blossoms. Oranges can make your cooking more vibrant. For a peppy salad, toss segments with thinly sliced fennel, chicory, and an orange vinaigrette. Combine softened butter, grated orange zest, orange juice, and tarragon for a tasty compound butter to smear under the skin of a roasting chicken or on a seared salmon fillet. Drizzle segments with warm chocolate sauce for a simple dessert. To cleanly segment an orange, follow the photos on p. 81.

deeply cupped half holds the flesh and liquor) and drape a wet towel over them so the shells don't dry out. A fresh oyster's incomparable silky-firm texture and minerally sweetness are best savored unadorned—or at the very most, with a squeeze of lemon. For good shucking technique, see *Fine Cooking* #22, p. 68, or watch a video clip at www.finecooking.com.

Amy Albert is Fine Cooking's senior editor. ♦

Q&A

Have a question of general interest about cooking?

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Oil tenderizes dense cakes

All the carrot cake recipes I've ever read call for oil rather than butter. Why is this?

—Melanie Shenker,
via e-mail

Carole Walter replies: Dense cakes, such as carrot, zucchini, apple, and pumpkin, are commonly made with vegetable oil because liquid oil acts more rapidly than softened butter to coat the protein molecules in flour, preventing the formation of gluten, which makes cakes tough. Because of this, dense cakes made with oil are more moist and tender than those made with butter.

Many cakes made with fruits and vegetables require refrigeration to prevent rancidity and to prolong shelf life, so while melted butter would coat protein molecules as quickly as oil would, the downside is that it will solidify under refrigeration and change the texture of the cake. Oil, on the other hand, doesn't harden when chilled.

Carole Walter, the author of Great Cakes and Great Pies & Tarts, is a baking teacher.

The facts of life for yeast

How is commercial yeast made?

—Angela Coleman,
via e-mail

Glenna Vance replies: The manufacturing process for yeast begins with the isolation of the seed yeast, a laboratory

yeast culture uncontaminated by wild yeast in the air (a process too technical to get into here). The seed yeast is placed in small flasks to grow, and then transferred in a series of steps from the flasks to tanks of different sizes up to 1,000 gallons in volume. Now known as stock yeast, it is separated from the alcohol generated in this initial fermentation and stored in refrigerated tanks for the subsequent fermentation cultivation.

The fermentation cultivation process happens in 40,000-gallon vessels, where the yeast is fed measured quantities of sterilized molasses and large amounts of air. The temperature is carefully controlled and the acidity (pH) frequently adjusted through the addition of ammonium salts. This process continues until the growing yeast reaches the capacity of the fermentation tank, at which point it is harvested.

Harvesting concentrates the yeast cells by passing the liquid contents of the fermentation tanks through large centrifugal pumps called separators. In a process similar to spinning clothes dry in a washing machine, excess liquid is driven off, resulting in an off-white liquid called cream yeast.

To make compressed or cake yeast, the cream yeast is pumped into presses to remove even more water. The compressed yeast is transferred to mixers to ensure uniformity, and then to extruders for cutting into appropriate sizes before being wrapped and refrigerated.

Active dry yeast is processed one step further: It's

extruded into noodle form, loaded onto a conveyor belt, and passed through a series of drying chambers where warm air is blown through the yeast. The yeast emerges with a moisture content of about 8%, compared to 70% in compressed yeast. The dry yeast is packaged in nitrogen-flushed three-pack strips and in 4-ounce jars that can be stored at room temperature until opened.

Glenna Vance is the consumer services and public relations manager for Lesaffre Yeast Corporation.

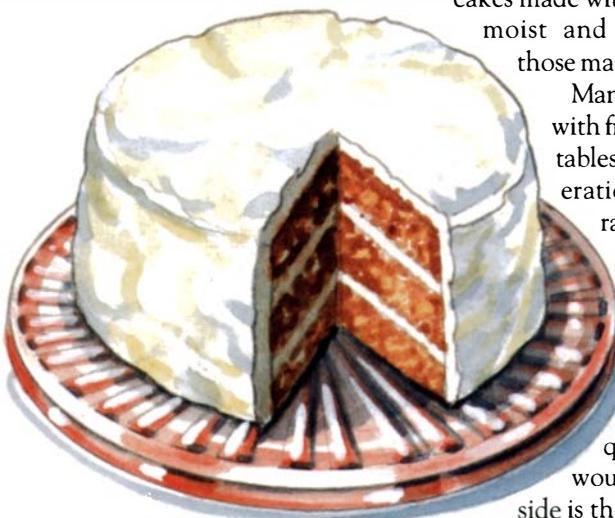
Butter is better off in the fridge

All my life, I have stored butter covered at room temperature. Recently I heard that butter should always be stored under refrigeration. Is keeping butter at room temperature a health risk, or is cold storage more of a quality issue?

—Mary Kay Jeakle,
via e-mail

Lydia Botham replies: It's a quality issue. Butter quickly picks up off flavors when exposed to oxygen. Storage at room temperature exacerbates this tendency, while cold storage slows it down.

Fresh butter should have a delicate cream flavor and pale yellow color. To preserve these qualities as long as possible, try to keep your butter refrigerated between serving times. Because you're trying to keep oxygen out, the more tightly you wrap your butter, the better. Fold partially used sticks of butter back up in their original wrapper if possible and supplement with plastic food wrap if necessary.



Store sticks of butter in their original carton inside a resealable plastic food bag or airtight container in the coldest part of the refrigerator—not on the refrigerator door—for up to one week beyond the date printed on the package. It also helps to store butter away from foods with strong odors. When placed in a resealable plastic freezer bag, butter freezes well for up to four months.

Lydia Botham is the test kitchen director for Land O' Lakes Company.

Why use a wooden spoon?

Many recipes specify a wooden spoon for stirring or other uses. What is the advantage of a wooden spoon over metal or plastic?

—Robert Shorter,
Winston-Salem, NC

Abigail Johnson Dodge replies: “Mix with a wooden spoon” is something of an old-fashioned phrase that remains ingrained in modern recipe parlance. In the past, wooden spoons were the mixing utensil of choice because they were large enough to mix a batter, heatproof enough so they wouldn’t melt, nonreactive so they wouldn’t have adverse effects on acidic foods, and soft enough so they wouldn’t scratch the surfaces of pots and pans.

Nowadays, we continue to see this phrase in recipes even though we have many other utensils that can do the same job as wooden spoons. The newest addition to the modern kitchen arsenal, heatproof silicone spatulas, are great for stirring and scraping hot ingredients on



or off the stove, and they won’t scratch nonstick surfaces. Rubber spatulas and plastic spoons can be big enough to handle many mixing tasks as long as no heat is involved—they’ll still melt. Large stainless-steel spoons are nonreactive and strong enough to mix almost anything.

That said, a wooden spoon is still an essential tool. It’s sturdy and fits comfortably in the hand, plus its rounded business end is often the best fit for the stirring task at hand. The next time you see the phrase, “stir with a wooden spoon,” by all means use one if it’s available. But if your wooden spoon is otherwise engaged, consider your other tools. You probably have something else ready and waiting to play stand-in.

Abigail Johnson Dodge was Fine Cooking’s test kitchen director for eight years; she’s now a contributing editor.

Using different kinds of miso

I want to try a recipe that calls for miso, but at the

store, I discovered there are several varieties of miso. What’s different about them, and how do I decide which one to use?

—Lisa Whalen,
Highland, NY

Thy Tran replies: Miso is a highly nutritious fermented soybean paste made by steaming and crushing soybeans, adding sea salt and *koji* (a grain culture that triggers fermentation), and then aging the mixture for three to thirty months.

Depending on the type of *koji*, the color of miso ranges from pale golden yellow to rich chocolate brown. Generally, the lighter the miso, the sweeter and more delicate its flavor. A darker miso is saltier and “meatier.”

In the West, there are two basic types of miso that are widely available. A rice *koji* makes *shinshu-miso*, often labeled light or yellow miso. With a smooth texture and slightly tart undertone to its saltiness, it’s excellent for general use in salads, dressings, and cooking. Its light flavor and color will not over-

power vegetables, chicken, or fish.

Inaka-miso, or red miso, develops from a barley culture. Also called *sendai-miso*, red miso’s deep color hints at its rich, robust flavor. It’s good for adding depth to hearty soups and sauces. Try it in baked dishes and with root vegetables, beans, or winter squash.

You may also find two other renowned misos in specialty markets. *Shiro-miso*, or white miso, has a mild, sweet flavor and creamy texture. Fermented the least amount of time, it’s best used in dressings and simple soups. Strong, thick *hatcho-miso* (or the similar *aka-miso*), made solely from soybeans, matures to a deep brown color and smoky flavor. The finest of miso soups owe their complexity to this extremely rich miso.

Whatever the variety, remember that miso’s flavor is quite concentrated, so use it sparingly. Always add miso toward the end of cooking and never boil it, as high heat will destroy both its flavor and its nutrients. For the smoothest sauces and soups, whisk the miso into an equal volume of slightly warm broth until smooth, and then gradually stir the thinned miso back into the pot. Use about a tablespoon of miso for every cup of liquid.

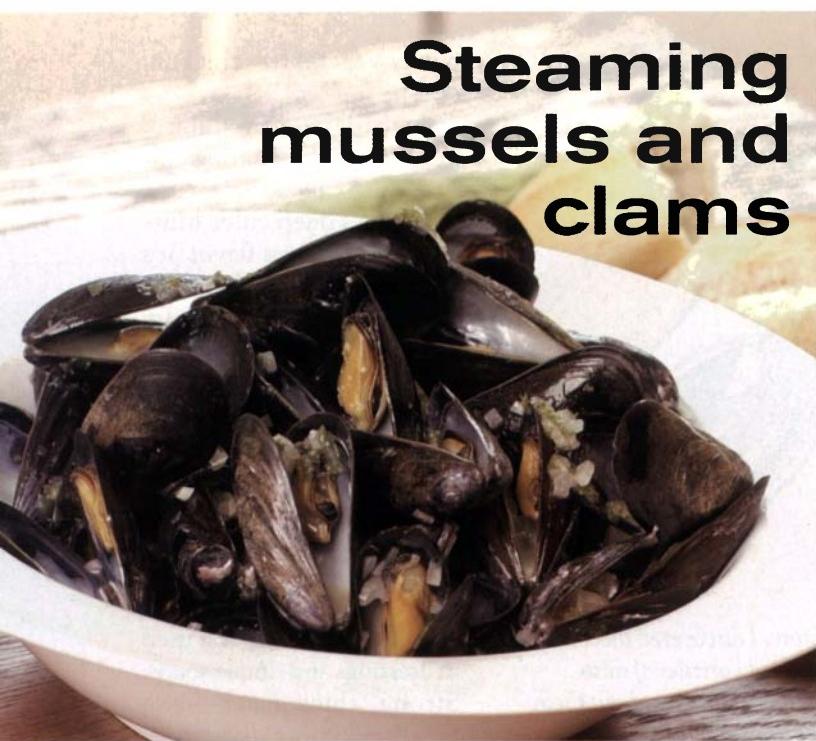
You can also use miso as a substitute for salt or soy sauce or in place of anchovy paste for vegetarian recipes. Miso keeps for up to a year if sealed and refrigerated.

Thy Tran, the co-author of The Williams-Sonoma Kitchen Companion, is a freelance food writer in San Francisco. ♦

TECHNIQUE CLASS

BY JAMES PETERSON

Steaming mussels and clams



There's no better way to cook mussels and clams than steaming, and the reason is simple. When these shellfish cook, they release flavorful juices. If you steam them with a small amount of liquid, like wine, the juices

drip down to the bottom of the pot and combine with the steaming liquid to become a shellfish broth with incredible flavor. The resulting dish—shellfish served in its own broth—is so tasty and easy to prepare that the hardest thing

about it for most people is finding good, fresh shellfish.

Closed shells are a sign of freshness

When shopping for mussels and clams, consider size and freshness. If you're new to mussels, buy small ones. Small mussels are usually cultivated, contain very little sand, and have a less fishy flavor than their wild cousins. When you spot mussels at the fish counter, they should be completely closed or just slightly gaping. Once you have them in hand, stick your nose in the bag and take a good whiff. If they smell like anything other than the sea, give them back and either try another fishmonger or plan on cooking something else.

Steamers, littlenecks, and cherrystones are the best clams for steaming. There are two basic types of clams to choose from: soft and hard. Soft-shell clams—a misnomer because their shells aren't soft

at all—have a small necklike siphon sticking out between their shells. They're also known as steamers. Because of their siphons, soft-shell clams can't close all the way, so to check for freshness, touch the siphon; it should pull in slightly.

The most widely available hard-shell clams are Atlantic clams, also known as quahogs (pronounced koh-hogs). The smallest quahogs are called littlenecks. Even though they're the smallest, they're also the most expensive because they have the sweetest flavor and are very tender. Medium-size quahogs are known as cherrystones, and the largest quahogs are called chowder clams. As with mussels, look for hard-shell clams that are firmly shut and have a clean sea scent.

When you get your mussels or hard-shell clams home, let them breathe. Take them out of the bag if they came in one (they suffo-

Steam the shellfish in a flavorful liquid



Slowly simmer 2 cups dry white wine, 3 finely chopped shallots, 2 sprigs fresh thyme (or 1/2 teaspoon dried), and 1 bay leaf in an 8-quart pot for 5 minutes.



Add 4 pounds scrubbed mussels or clams, cover the pot, and turn the heat to high. When steam starts to escape, reduce the heat to medium.



After 5 minutes, shake the pot to redistribute the shellfish. After another 2 minutes for mussels (7 minutes for clams), check to see if most of the shells have opened. If not, continue steaming until they do.

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Turn the steaming liquid into a sauce



Transfer the shellfish to hot serving bowls with a slotted spoon or skimmer (you'll have eight first-course or four main-course servings).



Slowly pour the broth into a clean saucepan, leaving any grit behind. Add 3 tablespoons chopped parsley and season with black pepper; if you like, whisk in ½ cup unsalted butter or extra-virgin olive oil.



Heat the sauce for a minute or two and then ladle it over the shellfish. Serve with plenty of crusty bread for sopping up the sauce.

cate in plastic), put them in a bowl, cover with a wet towel, and store them in the fridge. Though it's best to cook them as close to purchasing as possible, they'll keep this way for up to two days. Whatever you do, don't soak them in water—fresh water kills them and leaches out their flavor.

Because soft-shell clams gape open, they're inevitably full of sand and should be encouraged to cleanse themselves before cooking. Soaking them in cold salt water (1 cup salt to 3 quarts water) overnight or at least for a few hours usually takes care of the sand. Then they can be stored like hard-shell clams.

Shortly before you're ready to start steaming, scrub the mussels or clams with a stiff brush under cold running water to get rid of the grit that otherwise will end up in your sauce. If the mussels have big "beards"—black hairlike fibers that enable them to cling to things—use your thumb and forefinger to yank them off.

Eliminate any dead clams or mussels before steaming

because a bad one can ruin the whole batch. Look for any mussels that have opened and tap them on the kitchen counter. If they don't close, discard them. For closed mussels, press on the sides of the two shells in opposing directions. Dead mussels will fall apart.

Clams should all still be firmly shut. If some have started to open, give them a tap. If they don't snap shut relatively quickly, throw them away.

Learn one easy technique and then vary the flavors

The French are mad for mussels and have steamed them for years in the famous and easily prepared dish *moules à la marinière*—mussels steamed with white wine, shallots, and parsley. Clams are also marvelous when given the *marinière* treatment.

The technique is ridiculously simple. All you have to do is concoct a flavorful steaming liquid out of wine, beer, or another liquid along with some aromatic ingredients

like garlic, shallots, and herbs. You simmer the steaming liquid for a few minutes to develop its flavor, then you add the mussels or clams, cover, and steam until the shellfish have opened.

Once the shellfish are cooked, you can transfer them to serving bowls and simply ladle over the broth, or convert the broth into a more classic sauce by combining it with heavy cream, butter, or olive oil (especially good for pasta). Homemade *aïoli* (garlic mayonnaise) whisked into the broth is also terrific.

Once you've made *moules à la marinière* (see the photos starting on p. 20), you can invent variations with very little effort. Add garlic, tomatoes, saffron, ginger, soaked and softened dried chiles, curry powder (cooked in a little butter for 30 seconds to release its flavor), or fresh herbs—such as tarragon, chives, cilantro, basil, or marjoram—alone or in combination. For a Thai variation, add a little fish sauce, lemongrass, and hot chile to the steaming

liquid and then enrich the broth with coconut milk once the mussels are done.

What if one doesn't open?

If you steam mussels and find that one doesn't open, it's almost invariably bad. Clams are a little trickier. For every dozen clams you steam, you're likely to find one that won't open. Don't assume it's bad and throw it away yet. Instead, stick a thin knife between the shells and give it a little twist. Nine times out of ten, the clam snaps open, perfectly good (sniff if you're not sure).

If you steamed soft-shell clams, beware the siphon; it's covered with a gritty black sheath that you don't want to eat. The easiest way to deal with it is to pick up the cooked clam by its siphon and pull away the sheath as you eat the clam.

James Peterson is the author of numerous cookbooks, including *Fish & Shellfish*. He is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*. ♦

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ENJOYING WINE

BY TIM GAISER

Start dinner right with an apéritif

When it comes to drinks before dinner, many of us might pour a martini, a scotch, or a bourbon. With respect to them all, none of them whets your appetite like an apéritif. Apéritifs (ah-pay-ree-TEEF)—wine- or spirit-based drinks that are fortified with other flavors—have a unique combination of sweet and bitter elements that set you up for the meal to come. Champagne, much more than still wine, fills the apéritif role well, too. There are several kinds of apéritifs, all of which are easy on the wallet and easy to enjoy simply.

Aromatized wines are infused with herbs

Aromatized wines are made by infusing white wine with herbs, bark, roots, and other plant extracts. Each blend can contain as many as a hundred herbs or more, and the exact recipe is a secret that's closely guarded by the particular manufacturer.

Vermouth is the best-known aromatized wine. It's also the world's most popular apéritif. Every vermouth starts with a simple white-wine base sweetened with sugar syrup that's then fortified with neutral spirits (usually vodka) to reach about 16% alcohol. At



No fancy glassware required. Pre-dinner apéritifs are delicious with soda, on the rocks, with a twist.

Delicious accompaniments for apéritifs

Here are some good bets for matching apéritifs and starters.

Smoked salmon, trout, or whitefish

- ◆ Dry vermouth on ice
- ◆ White Lillet on ice

Cheese puff pastry straws or crackers

- ◆ White Lillet on ice
- ◆ Kir Royale

Mixed olives

- ◆ Punt e Mes and soda with a twist
- ◆ Campari and soda with a twist

Spicy Maple

- ◆ Walnuts (p. 62)
- ◆ Sweet vermouth on ice
- ◆ Red Dubonnet on ice

Almonds with

Parmesan, Rosemary & Fennel (p. 63)

- ◆ White Lillet on the rocks
- ◆ Champagne Cocktail

Malabar Pecans (p. 63)

- ◆ Punt e Mes and soda with a twist
- ◆ Campari and soda with a twist

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this point, the base is flavored with a blend of botanicals, and the vermouth is then made into sweet red, sweet white, or dry white, depending on the blend. Martini & Rossi and Cinzano are classic Italian vermouths; Noilly Prat is a classic French brand. French-style vermouths tend to be drier than their Italian counterparts. There's also Vya, a good domestic vermouth that's available in dry and sweet versions.

While dry white vermouth is more winy-tasting, sweet vermouths are a balance of bitter and sweet. Either dry or sweet vermouth is delicious on the rocks with a lemon twist or in classic apéritif cocktails (see the sidebar at right). And when a recipe calls for dry white wine, dry French vermouth is an excellent substitute.

Lillet, Dubonnet, and St. Raphaël are delicious vermouth-based apéritifs. Each comes in a dry white and a sweeter red version; again, the blend of aromatics accounts for color and flavor differences. Like classic vermouths, they're good over ice with a lemon twist, with or without a splash of soda.

Bitters are a complex blend of plant extracts

Bitters, a sweet and bitter blend of many herbs and botanicals, is quinine based, which is what gives the drink its pronounced bitterness. As with aromatized wines, the exact recipes remain secrets of the trade. Campari, Cynar, Punt e Mes, and Fernet are some you may run across; try them neat, on the rocks, or with soda. A bitters drink isn't just a delicious apéritif, it's an excellent digestif and the perfect way to top off a hearty meal. Bitters was originally

Apéritif cocktails

There are scores of cocktails you can make with apéritifs. Here's a short list of personal favorites.

<p>Champagne Cocktail In a champagne flute, combine ½ teaspoon fine sugar and 2 dashes Angostura bitters. Fill with Champagne or other sparkling wine; garnish with a lemon twist.</p>	<p>Pimm's Cup Fill a highball glass with 1½ ounces Pimm's No. 1 and soda. Garnish with a lemon wedge and slice of cucumber.</p>
<p>Kir Royale To a glass of Champagne or other sparkling wine, add a splash of crème de cassis (black currant liqueur). Garnish with a lemon twist.</p>	<p>Negroni Combine 1 ounce each Campari and gin, and ½ ounce each sweet and dry vermouth. Serve over ice or up in a martini glass. Garnish with a lemon twist.</p>
<p>Americano In a highball glass, blend 2 ounces each Campari and sweet vermouth. Add ice, fill with soda, and garnish with a lemon twist.</p>	
<p>Bellini In a Champagne flute, combine 3 ounces each Champagne (or other sparkling wine) and chilled peach juice (available in health-food stores). Add a dash each of fresh lemon juice and grenadine.</p>	

used by medieval monks for medicinal purposes (and many people also believe that bitters is the best possible cure for a hangover.)

Campari is one of the tastiest examples; it's good over ice with an orange slice or lemon twist; mixed with soda; or mixed with fresh orange or grapefruit juice. It's also the mainstay of many classic apéritif cocktails. Orange-flavored Aperol is similar in character to Campari, while the very bitter Cynar is produced from artichokes. Punt e Mes has a pronounced bitterness, too. Serve bitters apéritifs over ice with soda garnished with a lemon twist. Angostura bit-

ters, which comes in a small bottle, is much more concentrated than bitters apéritifs; it's used in cocktails, but only a dash or two.

Also look for Pimm's No. 1, a gin-based apéritif from Britain. It's traditionally mixed with soda and garnished with a wedge of lemon and a slice of cucumber.

Dilute pastis-type apéritifs with water

Mention pastis and images of Toulouse-Lautrec prints and the Belle Epoque might come to mind. This is because absinthe, the original pastis, was all the rage in late nineteenth century Parisian café and

bistro society, and was often imbibed to the extreme. Although absinthe has long been banned in all but a few European countries, two much milder descendants—Pernod and Ricard—are easy to find. Both are licorice-flavored, but each is produced differently: Pernod is made from star anise seeds; Ricard from licorice extracts and herbs. Both are traditionally served over ice, with one part liqueur cut with four parts water so that their clear yellow color becomes opaque and milky.

Sparkling wine is a great apéritif, too

Champagne and other sparkling wines are also delicious apéritifs in their own right: Light body, fizz, and crispness make them one of the most versatile choices for a wide variety of starters. There are several Champagne cocktails worth trying, too: Kir Royale, Champagne Cocktail, and Bellini are some of the most popular (see the sidebar at left). Just be sure to use a good (but not great) sparkling wine: For Champagne-type cocktails, a fine sparkler is a waste of money, as mix-ins would overpower its subtle flavors.

Serve apéritifs in all manner of glasses

Any number of glasses are right for apéritifs, from white-wine glasses and short "rocks" glasses for vermouths or other apéritifs served over ice, to taller highball glasses for mixing with soda. For specialty cocktails like those above, a martini glass or a Champagne glass is most appropriate.

Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier and wine consultant, is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. He lives in San Francisco. ♦



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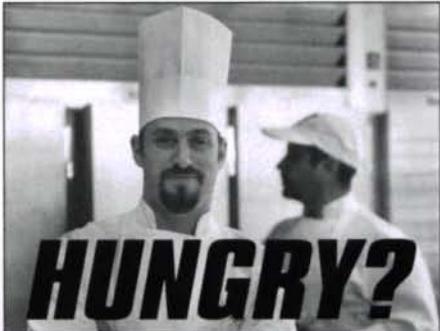
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Red pepper flavors the foods of Portugal

Massa de pimentão—sweet red bell pepper conserve—is a signature seasoning in the cooking of the Alentejo, the southeastern province of Portugal where my father was raised. The salty-sweet paste flavors all sorts of meat and poultry dishes, including the Alentejo's version of *linguiça*, Portugal's best-known sausage. It takes up to five days to cure the peppers for the paste, but the process is extremely simple and mostly hands-off. One batch of paste keeps for months and is enough to flavor several different dishes. The recipe at right for Roast Pork with Sweet Red Pepper Paste & Roasted Potatoes is one of my favorite ways to use *massa de pimentão*, and I think it's a fine example of the bright, gutsy flavors we love in our cuisine.



Hallmark ingredients



A seafaring nation, Portugal brought back flavors and ingredients from around the world.

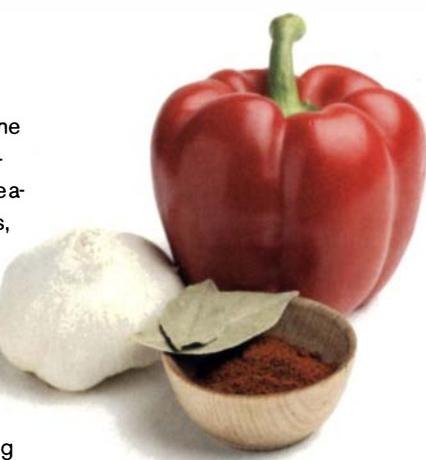
Many of the staple ingredients in Portuguese cuisine are a result of foreign cultural influences. The Phoenicians, Turks, and especially the Moors of North Africa contributed wine, garlic, sugar, citrus, and almonds. During the late fifteenth century, Portugal found sea routes to the Orient, the Indies, and the New World, giving new life to the country's cuisine with new spices and ingredients. In addition to olive oil, parsley, onions, and cilantro, the most dominant and frequently used flavorings in the savory dishes of the Alentejo province are paprika, garlic, bay leaves, and red pepper paste. In other provinces and in the Azores, cumin, nutmeg, curry, chiles, and safflower are used judiciously as well.

Sweet red pepper paste (*massa de pimentão*) and paprika (*colorau*)

The simple, old method of preserving fresh red bell peppers

by turning them into a salt-cured paste for use during the winter months eventually became the standard way to season and flavor poultry, meats, and pork sausages year-round. Typically, a very small amount of the paste (a tablespoon or less) is combined with little more than crushed garlic and a touch of olive oil before being spread over pork cutlets, roasts, and other meats. Other times, depending on the province and on the cook, it's fused with more spices and herbs before being rubbed on poultry and meats. The most popular use of the paste is with pork. Because the paste is very salty on its own, the meat needs no additional salt.

Sweet paprika (*colorau-doce*) is used more often than hot paprika in Portugal. Orange-red Portuguese sweet paprika, made from dried and ground red bell peppers, is widely used to flavor meats, poultry, sausages, and side dishes. In



some provinces, paprika is used instead of red pepper paste, while in others it's used in combination with the paste.

Though sweet paprika and red pepper paste are both made from red bell peppers, the differing methods of preparation result in unique flavors, the former bearing a toasted edge and the latter a milder sweet and salty taste. If you can't get Portuguese paprika (see Resources, far right), substitute the dark red Hungarian Szeged sweet paprika. There isn't an adequate substitute for the flavor of red pepper paste.

Bay leaves (*loureiro*)

Native to most southern European countries, bay leaves grow profusely in Portugal. This age-old herb is a mainstay

ingredient in soups, stews, seasoning pastes, and more. When using them in a seasoning paste, pulverize them in a spice grinder before putting

them in a mortar for additional grinding with the other ingredients. Be sure they're ground very finely; pieces with jagged edges can be dangerous to eat.

RECIPES

Roast Pork with Sweet Red Pepper Paste & Roasted Potatoes

In this easy-to-make dish (called *lombo de porco assada com massa de pimentão e batatas assadas* in Portuguese), garlic, bay, paprika, and red pepper paste suffuse a pork loin and red potatoes, which roast together in the same pan. To round out the meal, serve spinach sautéed with garlic and sprinkled with a little red-wine or cider vinegar. Serves six.

FOR THE PORK:

- 3 large cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1½ bay leaves, very finely ground
- 1½ tsp. sweet paprika
- 1½ Tbs. Sweet Red Pepper Paste (see the recipe at right)
- 3 Tbs. olive oil
- 3-lb. pork loin roast

FOR THE POTATOES:

- 6 large red potatoes, washed, dried, and cut into 8 wedges each
- 1½ Tbs. finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 Tbs. sweet paprika
- ½ Tbs. coarse salt
- ¾ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 3 Tbs. olive oil

Heat the oven to 350°F. With a mortar and pestle or a fork, mash the garlic, ground bay leaves, and paprika to a paste. Stir in the sweet red pepper paste. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil while stirring constantly. Cut crosshatches about ½ inch deep every few inches along the surface of the roast. Rub the paste all over the roast, pushing some of the paste into the crosshatches.

In a large bowl, toss the potatoes with 1 Tbs. of the parsley and the garlic, paprika, salt, pepper, and olive oil until well coated.

Put the pork in a lightly oiled roasting pan and scatter the potatoes around it. Roast until the internal temperature of the pork is 150°F and the potatoes are tender, about 1 hour (turning the potatoes occasionally). Transfer the roast to a carving board and let it rest for



10 to 15 min. before slicing. Sprinkle the potatoes with the remaining parsley and serve.

Sweet Red Pepper Paste

It's traditional to use a meat grinder to make this paste (*massa de pimentão* in Portuguese), but a food processor or blender will do. The salt in this recipe acts as a preservative, so the paste keeps for several months in the refrigerator when stored as directed. To use the refrigerated paste, push aside the congealed olive oil, remove what you need, and replace the oil, adding more as needed to cover the paste. Yields about ¾ cup.

- 3 large red bell peppers
- 6 lb. coarse salt (about 2 boxes), or as needed
- 2 Tbs. good-quality olive oil, or as needed

Core, seed, and quarter the peppers. Trim away the ribs and any top and bottom ends that are extremely curvy.

Set a large freestanding stainless-steel or plastic sieve or footed colander in a large nonreactive pan or dish with sides.

Line the sieve with a double layer of cheesecloth and pour a 1-inch layer of salt into the sieve to form a base (some will seep out). Lay a single layer of pepper quarters, skin side up, on the salt.

Press the peppers into the salt, making sure that any curvy parts are coated with salt or mold may form. Cover

with a ½-inch layer of salt and another layer of peppers. Repeat with as many layers as needed, ending with a layer of salt. Set a heavy dish on top to weight it down. Let stand at room temperature for up to five days to remove the moisture from the peppers. By the fourth or fifth day, the peppers should be about ¼ inch thick or less, which means they're done.

Brush the excess salt off the peppers. Pass the peppers through a meat grinder or process them briefly in a food processor or blender; the texture should be somewhat coarse. Pack the paste in a sterilized glass jar, leaving about 1 inch at the top. Cover the paste with about ½ inch of olive oil, seal the jar, and refrigerate. Discard the salt.

Garlic (*alho*)

Garlic is the backbone of many Portuguese dishes. Not only is it used in seafood dishes, soups, stews, and braises, but its flavor is clearly evident in the *chouriço* and *linguiça* pork sausages made in the Alentejo and other provinces and by immigrants here in the United States. Instead of simple chopping, most Portuguese recipes call for garlic to be crushed in a mortar and pestle, a method that releases more of garlic's full flavor.

Books

Want to learn more about the cuisine of Portugal? In addition to Ana Ortins's own book, *Portuguese Homestyle Cooking*, she recommends *The Food of Portugal*, by Jean Anderson.

Resources

Portuguese paprika can be found in Spanish and Portuguese markets as well as in some supermarkets. FamousFoods.com (866/646-4266; www.famousfoods.com) and Mello's Specialty Foods (508/676-0167; www.portuguesefood.com) offer Portuguese foods by mail.

A first-generation descendant of Portuguese immigrants, Ana Patuleia Ortins is a cooking teacher and the author of Portuguese Homestyle Cooking. ♦

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Doughmakers Gourmet Bakeware is made of solid aluminum so it heats evenly, and it isn't coated, so there are no worries about scratching it. What's unique about this bakeware is that the surface of each pan is embossed with a patented pebble pattern, which creates tiny channels that let hot air flow under foods for excellent browning.

To test the bakeware, I did a few side-by-side tests, pitting my trusty old bakeware against Doughmakers. My results proved that the Doughmakers pans do brown foods beautifully, but then, so did my old pans. The real difference showed itself when I

unmolded some round cake layers. Because the pebble pattern seemed to hold on to more of the butter and flour coating I'd applied to the pans, removing the cakes from the Doughmakers pans was a snap. (The big, easy-to-grip handles helped, too.) I also noticed that these pans don't warp, even at very high temperatures.

The line includes baking sheets, jellyroll pans, and pie pans, as well as square, round, and rectangular cake pans; prices range from \$13 to \$25. Call the Baker's Catalogue at 800/827-6836 or order at www.bakerscatalogue.com.

—Abigail Dodge, contributing editor

Two new tools for easy cork removal

Being a longtime devotee of the simple waiter's knife corkscrew, I was initially skeptical about The Rabbit corkscrew, which seemed like just another high-design gimmick. But it works really well: The Rabbit is easy to grip and align, it uncorks a bottle with one sweeping pull of the

lever, and it disengages the cork with another. It's especially handy if you're opening a number of bottles for a party, or if you're timid about opening just one for fear of breaking the cork. Professional Cutlery Direct (800/859-6994; www.cutlery.com) sells the Rabbit for \$80.

If uncorking a bottle of Champagne feels a little like holding a loaded pistol, consider the Perfect Pop Champagne opener. It fits right over the foil and wire cage that cover the Champagne cork; all you need do is loosen the wire cage first. The Perfect Pop's comforting heft and finger-friendly fluted surface let you twist the cork from a bottle of bubbly safely and comfortably—and well in time to watch the ball drop at midnight. It costs about \$40; call 518/398-6617 or order online at www.perfectpop.com.

—Amy Albert,
senior editor



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Swift and simple cooking with chile pastes

I love the flavor of dried chiles, but I don't cook with them as often as I'd like because of the time it takes to seed, toast, rehydrate, and purée them. But now that I've discovered a line of chile pastes from the Terra Sol Chile Company in Texas, I don't have that excuse. These all-natural pastes are made from pure chile purée, balanced with a little sugar, salt, and citric acid. They come in ten varieties and are ready to go; all you have to do is unscrew the lid. They'll keep in the refrigerator for up to a year. The chipotle paste is great for adding a smoky kick to a pot of chili, and you can whip up a quickie *harissa* (Tunisian hot sauce) with the New Mexico paste. I even made a remarkably good red enchilada sauce in about thirty minutes flat by thinning a mixture of the ancho paste, the New Mexico paste, and some tomato paste with chicken broth and then simmering this blend with some fried onion, garlic, and cumin. If time allows, I'll still toast and purée my own dried chiles for authenticity's sake, but in a pinch, these pastes are really convenient. A 4-ounce jar costs about \$8. Call 512/836-3525 for the location of a store near you, or to order a case of twelve jars, which can be a mix of varieties. For more info, visit www.terrasolimporters.com.

—Jennifer Armentrout, test kitchen manager



A nonstick pan that won't peel or blister

For the last four years, a Danish-made Scanpan has been my workhorse sauté pan. Forged from pressure-cast aluminum and merged with a ceramic-titanium nonstick cooking surface, Scanpan Titanium cookware is guaranteed not to peel, blister, crack, or warp. And after years of heavy use, my 10-inch skillet still performs well despite its discolored cooking surface and slightly diminished nonstick aspect. Weighty without being heavy, Scanpans are ovenproof up to 500°F and have stay-cool handles. Best of all, they act like good-quality *not* nonstick pans. Metal utensils won't damage the surface, they can be immersed

in cold water right after cooking, and caramelly nubbins form when sautéing so there's something to deglaze into a sauce. The pans also heat evenly, though slowly.

Scanpan recently introduced its Titanium Ergonomic line (shown here). Made from the same materials as the original line, these pans have a dimpled cooking surface (alleged to be a better nonstick surface) and curvy handles. Scanpans are sold in kitchen shops and can be ordered from Chef's Catalog (800/338-3232; www.chefscatalog.com). A 10-inch Titanium line skillet costs about \$65.

—Sarah Jay, managing editor



Rice alternatives for risotto

Though it's often listed as the only choice in recipes, Arborio isn't the only rice you can use to make authentic risotto. Vialone Nano, Baldo, and Carnaroli rices are other Italian short-grain varieties that make terrific risotto, and in some parts of Italy, they're preferred over Arborio. After trying each of them, I've come to adore Carnaroli. It's a smaller grain than Arborio with a super-high starch content, which means

that it can absorb huge amounts of liquid without overcooking, so it gives you the ultra-creamy yet toothsome texture that is the hallmark of a superior risotto.

The Principato di Lucedio estate near Turin, Italy, produces and exports all these rice varieties to North America. I suggest you experiment with them to find your favorite. Call 877/337-2491 or order online at www.chefshop.com. All varieties come in 1.1-pound bags. Carnaroli is \$6, Vialone Nano is \$5.25, and Baldo is \$4.50 (plus shipping).

—J.A.

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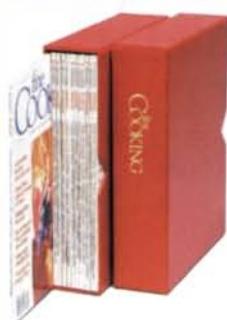


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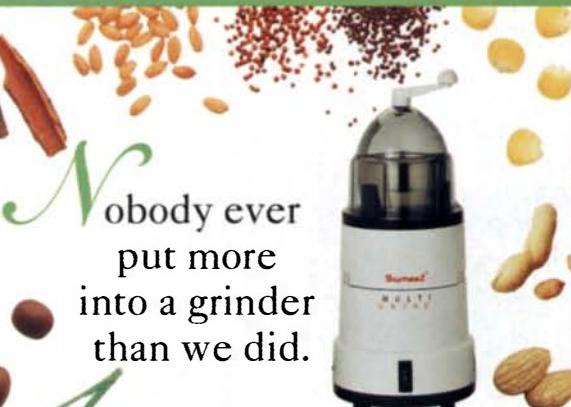
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Heirloom white corn makes a comeback

Once an important staple grain to native Americans, Iroquois white corn has barely survived over the centuries. Its distinctive, nutty flavor was nearly lost to the modern easier-to-grow hybrid corn varieties. But now, Iroquois from the Cattaraugus Reservation in western New York State have reintroduced this heirloom grain in the form of roasted

cornflour (fine cornmeal). Harvested by hand, lightly pan-roasted in a log cabin next to the corn fields, and milled to order, the flavor, texture, and freshness of this cornflour is nothing like ordinary cornmeal. The aroma alone tells you that anything you make with it—like corncakes or cornbread—will be special. Really, it's that good. Iroquois Roasted White Corn Flour is sold in 5-pound bags for \$15 plus shipping. To order, call 877/246-6337 or 505/986-0366.

—Maryellen Driscoll, contributor



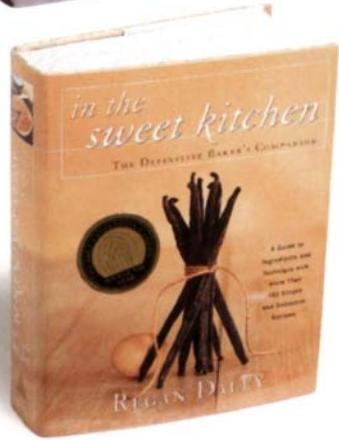
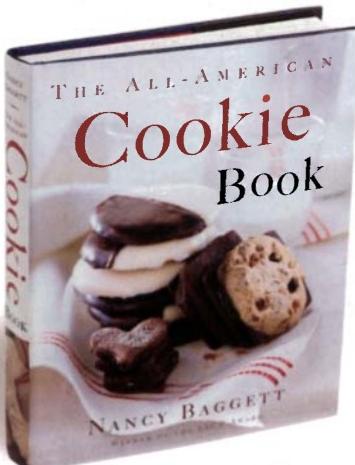
Two baking books any cook would love

Though I'm not a die-hard baker, I've already put two new baking books on my Christmas list. Nancy Baggett's *The All-American Cookie Book* (\$35; hardcover, 395 pp.) would be a real treasure for the recipes alone (New York Black & Whites, Maple-Sugar Cookies, Turtle Bars, Chocolate Whoopie Pies, Key Lime Frosties, Moravian Molasses Cookies). But her

thorough research—Baggett crisscrossed the country and delved into antique cookbooks to find and update the best American cookie recipes—makes reading this cookbook fascinating, too.

It was no fluke that Canadian pastry chef Regan Daley's *In the Sweet Kitchen* (\$35, hardcover, 692 pp.) won the 2001 IACP Cookbook of the Year award. Daley, who writes like she's your friend next door, somehow manages to convey her monumental baking knowledge in a book that's easy to understand and follow. Invaluable substitution charts, ingredient profiles, equipment descriptions, and technique primers (375 pages' worth) are followed by 150 of her best recipes (like Valrhona Molten Chocolate Cakes with Espresso Crème Anglaise).

—Susie Middleton,
executive editor



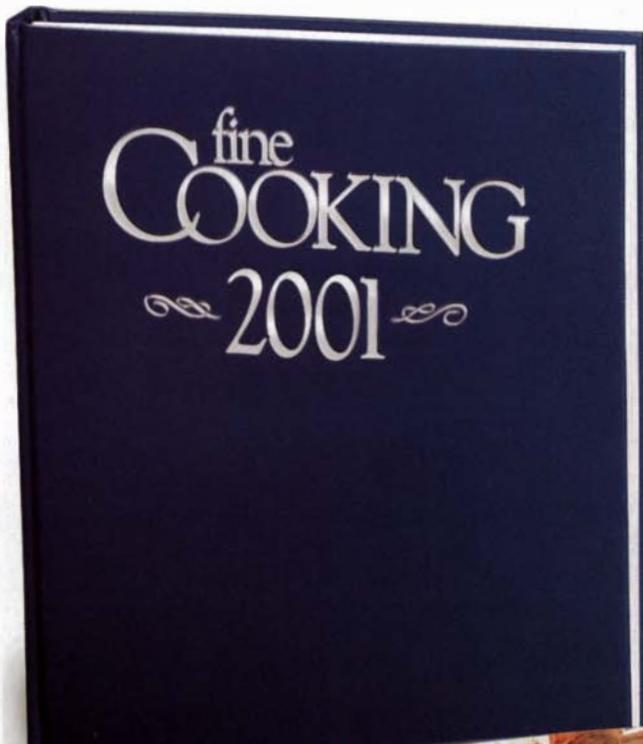
Batter bowl streamlines the pancake process

Pancakes have always been simple to make, but this pretty batter bowl from Bennington Potters in Vermont makes them even easier. A hefty handgrip, a pouring spout, and a 1½-quart capacity mean that you can mix the batter in the bowl and then pour it straight from the bowl onto your griddle. There's no dipping and dripping with a separate batter scoop. The bowl also works great for waffles, cupcakes, and anything else that begins as a pourable batter. Orvis (800/541-3541; www.orvis.com) sells the Bennington batter bowl for \$29 plus shipping.

—J.A. ♦

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A cardboard box safely transports food

I often bring hot, cooked food to family gatherings, and I've found that the best way to travel with it is to place the container in a small cardboard box lined with sheets of newspapers, with some scrunched-up newspapers wedged in around the dish if necessary. The cardboard box then goes into my car's trunk so the food is on a level surface. This helps me transport hot foods safely, and any spills are neatly contained in the box.

—Gwen Webster,
Laramie, WY

Perfect pastry cups

When making phyllo dough cups to fill with appetizers or desserts, I used to have a hard time keeping the pastry cup-shaped. Now I blind bake the pastry cups with homemade pastry weights. Start by cutting 6x6-inch squares of aluminum foil (or 8x8-inch, depending on your muffin tin size) and fitting each square into an empty muffin tin cup. Fill each cup two-thirds full with pie weights or dried beans and then twist the cor-



Line each cup of a muffin tin with a square of aluminum foil, add a mound of dried beans, and then twist up the foil's corners.

ners of the foil closed to create individual packets. Bake your phyllo dough with a foil packet in the center of each muffin cup. After baking, remove the packets with tongs and set aside to cool. You can reuse the packets within a few minutes to line another batch of phyllo cups. Once cooled, the packets can be stored for next time.

—Josephine Borut,
Westbury, NY

Roll out dough between nonstick baking mats

My silicone baking mat's non-stick coating makes an ideal surface for rolling out sticky pastry and cookie dough. I put the dough on one mat, cover it with another mat, and apply my rolling pin to the top. My rolling pin stays neat and clean. Once the dough is the right thickness, I just remove the top mat and proceed. If the dough needs chilling, I can pick up the mats and dough and put them all in the freezer for a few minutes. I also use my baking mat to knead bread dough and to roll pastry doughs such as puff pastry

and *pâte brisée*. Because the mat is so nonstick, you don't need as much flour for rolling and kneading, which yields a more tender result.

—Eliane Feiner,
sales manager for Demarle,
which makes Silpat liners

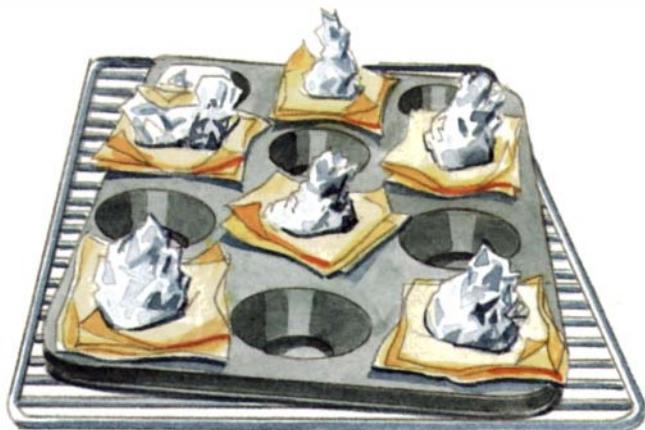
Measuring bread dough

Most bread recipes call for putting the dough in a large bowl and letting it rise until doubled. But how do you know when it's doubled? I solved that problem by using 4-quart plastic containers, which are sold in restaurant-supply stores. The containers are clearly marked in quart intervals, so you know exactly when the dough has doubled —no guesswork involved.

—Maureen Fox Lucas,
La Cañada, CA

Spin away potato liquid

It's a tradition in my house to cook potato latkes for large family gatherings. Over the years I've found an easier way to remove the liquid from large amounts of grated potatoes and onions. First I cut the potatoes and onions into chunks and grate them in a



Use the foil packets to help phyllo cups keep their shape during baking. You can reuse the packets after they cool.

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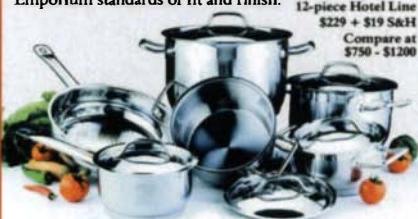
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food processor using the finest shredding blade. Then I dry the grated vegetables in a salad spinner in batches. The spinner makes quick work of removing the potato and onion liquid. I've found that I use much less oil to fry these dryer latkes until they're nice and crisp.

—Ruth Lang Ross,
Northbrook, IL

Mise en place for the forgetful

When a recipe calls for many ingredients, I sometimes forget to add an ingredient during the heat of cooking even though I've prepared everything in advance. Now when I do prep work prior to cooking, I try to combine ingredients that get added at the same time to cut down on the chance of leaving something

out. For example, if the recipe calls for adding the onions and garlic at the same time, I can combine these two ingredients in one prep bowl. I also check to see if the liquids (such as wine, vinegar, or stock) are added at the same time so I can put these ingredients into one container. The same goes for fresh or dried herbs and other flavorings that are added at the same point during cooking. It's easier to cook from a prep tray that has fewer containers.

—Jay Metcalfe, Seattle

Another use for a splatter screen

I love homemade fried chicken but hate to get hit with flying splatters of burning hot grease from the frying pan. As a defense, I always wear my elbow-length oven mitts, and I hold a

wire-mesh splatter screen in front of the pan when turning the chicken. The screen prevents the spatters of hot grease from reaching my face.

—Eva Klein, Dallas

Easy-peel eggs

When I make egg salad, I find it's easier and quicker to peel the hard-cooked eggs by leaving them in the pan they've cooked in (drain the cooking water first), putting the lid on, and shaking the pan vigorously. You'll hear the eggs smashing against each other and against the inside of the pan. Once the sound of smashing eggshells stops, remove the pan lid and lift the eggs from the loose strips of broken eggshells, giving the eggs a quick rinse to remove any bits of clinging shell.

—Kathleen B. Jenks,
Westfield, MA ♦

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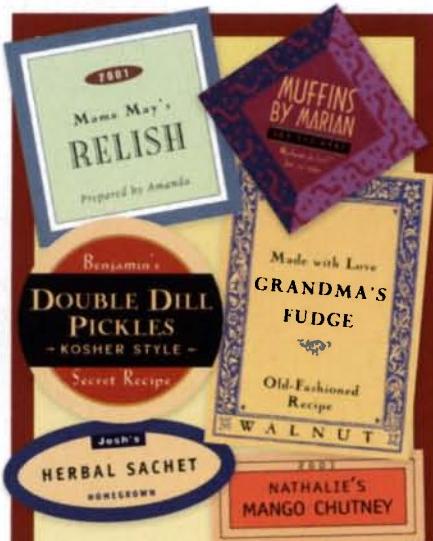
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READER SERVICE NO. 109

FLAVORINGS

BY DAVID KAMEN

Fennel seed adds Mediterranean warmth

Fennel seed is one of my favorite spices. Its mild licorice aroma lends a sunny warmth to foods that, alone or in concert with other spices, I find irresistible.

There are three different kinds of fennel plants, but only one of them, common fennel, produces fennel seeds. Common fennel is a perennial native to Mediterranean Italy, as well as to China and India, but it's now cultivated worldwide. Unlike its cousins, sweet fennel and Italian fennel, common fennel lacks the characteristic bulb at its base.

Fennel shouldn't be confused with its distant relative, anise. Anise seeds are smaller but stronger, with a distinct sweet licorice flavor. Fennel seeds are larger, and their flavor is similar to anise but a bit less sweet, less aromatic, and less pungent. That's why I think fennel seeds are better suited to savory dishes, whereas anise seeds work best in desserts.

Fennel seed has an affinity to pork, lamb, beef, poultry, fish (especially fatty fish), apples, cabbage, potatoes, and tomatoes. I use it in all my tomato sauces, meatloaves, meatballs, and meat sauces.

Fennel seed should be a dull greenish-yellow color. If it's tan or brown, it's old. Like all spices, fennel seed has a limited shelf life once opened. Its flavors begin to deteriorate after coming in contact with the air, but this doesn't be-



come noticeable for about six months. To prevent this, transfer fennel seed to small, airtight containers. It can be stored this way in a cool, dry place for six months to one

year. Or you can freeze fennel seed, as I usually do. Freezing extends its shelf life to about eighteen months.

It's best to toast fennel seed before using it to release

its flavorful oils. I put the seeds in my toaster oven until I can smell them, but you can also toss them in a hot, dry skillet. Either way, be careful not to burn them.

Fennel seed can be used whole, or it can be ground in a spice grinder or with a mortar and pestle. Whole seeds will soften when cooked in a sauce or a stew, but they should be ground when being used as a rub or in dishes with a short cooking time.

Fennel pollen is the latest darling of the spice world. It's the pollen of wild fennel plants that grow in California and Italy. Fennel pollen is more aromatic and vibrant than fennel seed, but it's also more volatile—and it's equally more expensive. I especially like it with roast chicken or pork. Fennel pollen should be used sparingly, as it's stronger than ground fennel seed.

Experimenting with fennel seed

- ◆ Add toasted fennel seed to the cavity of a chicken before it's roasted.
- ◆ Beat ground toasted fennel seed, lime juice, and snipped chives into salted butter. Chill the butter and melt it over a pork chop as soon as it comes off the grill.
- ◆ Sprinkle ground toasted fennel seed into a warm potato salad.
- ◆ Make a rub for pork or fish from crushed fennel and cumin seeds, salt, and pepper.
- ◆ Tie a tablespoon of toasted fennel seed in cheesecloth and simmer it in minestrone or other vegetable and bean soups.
- ◆ Simmer toasted fennel seed in your favorite tomato or meat sauce.
- ◆ Make a quick lamb sausage (or a mixture for lamb patties or meatballs) by combining ground lamb with whole fennel seed, brown sugar, dry mustard, salt, and pepper.
- ◆ Mix toasted fennel seed into hamburger patties, meatballs, or meatloaf.
- ◆ Substitute lightly crushed fennel seed for the caraway seed in Irish soda bread or rye bread.
- ◆ Add a little ground fennel seed to an apple pie.

David Kamen is a chef-instructor at The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. ♦



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Elegant but Easy Cornish Hens

Photos: Amy Albert



Little birds, big flavor.
With Cornish hens for dinner, each guest has a delicious, festive parcel on the plate.

Savory compound butters, stuffings, and glazes make the most of these tender little birds

BY JOANNE WEIR

It's that time of year again, when great surprises come bundled in lovely little packages. One of my favorite ways to carry this theme to the table is roasted Cornish game hens, which make an ideal main course for a special meal. They look and taste great without requiring a huge amount of effort—just a little preparation and straightforward roasting technique. And each bird is a generous single portion, so everyone has his or her own package on the plate. Best of all, Cornish game hens pair well with all kinds of flavors, including citrus, fresh herbs, aromatic spices, dried fruits, wild rice, and even truffle oil.

A roast chicken in miniature. A cross between White Rock and Cornish chickens, Cornish game



"Preparing Cornish hens is kind of like wrapping holiday gifts," says Joanne Weir. "There are so many ways to dress them up."



Tie the legs together for a neater, more compact presentation. But the birds are so small that you needn't sew up the cavity.

hens are basically miniature chickens, sometimes also called Rock Cornish hens. (They're different from poussins, which are young chickens.) Often they're sold frozen, in which case you'll need to allow 24 to 48 hours to defrost them in the refrigerator. When I do find these hens fresh in the grocery store, I'm careful to look for those with skin that isn't torn. I'll explain why in a moment.

Give little birds big flavor with compound butters or stuffings

There are a few good ways to flavor these roasted birds and make them as succulent as possible.

Make a compound butter to rub under the hens' skin. Compound butter is nothing more than softened butter combined with zesty ingredients, like the tangerine-herb butter on p. 49. Flavored butters can be made in advance and refrigerated or frozen—always a plus when you're entertaining or cooking for the holidays—or you can create one easily on a moment's notice using what you have on hand.

Try a full-flavored stuffing under the skin or in the cavity. A stuffing can be as simple as chopped olives, capers, and herbs, or something more splashy, like the Truffle-Scented Cornish Game Hens with Prosciutto & Wild Mushrooms (opposite); my secret weapon there is truffle oil. Like compound butters, you can make a stuffing well in advance and then stuff the birds just before roasting.

Be aware that a game hen's skin is thinner than a regular chicken's, and therefore more prone to tearing. That's why you need to choose hens without tears, so the stuffing stays inside. Also, when slipping a stuffing or butter under the skin, try not to force or overstuff—the skin will rip during roasting if you've added too much, so stick to the quantities called for in the recipes. Hens stuffed under the skin need a little less roasting time than if the cavity is stuffed.

Stuffing inside the cavity is, of course, a classic way to add flavor to your game hens. I'm especially fond of couscous and rice stuffings, which you can make a day or two ahead. Make sure that the stuffing is completely cooled, and wait to stuff the hens until right before you roast them.

When roasting Cornish game hens, I use a shallow roasting pan or a jellyroll pan. A wire rack set in the pan is ideal, if it can fit, although it's not absolutely essential. I've had good results roasting game hens without a rack, too. If you don't have a pan that fits the number of birds you're roasting, use two smaller pans. Be sure that there's a little room around the birds for air to circulate and that the pans can sit side by side on the same rack in the oven. You don't even need to fuss with turning game hens during roasting. I just set them breast side up, brush them with melted butter, and roast at 425°F, and then brush them with melted butter or a glaze halfway through. In less than an hour, you'll have golden, crisped hens.



A special-occasion treat.
A mince of wild mushrooms and prosciutto slipped under the skin gives these hens irresistible flavor.
Truffle oil is the crowning touch.

Glazed Roasted Cornish Game Hens with Couscous Stuffing

If you can't find dried apples for the stuffing, dried plums or cherries are good substitutes. Serves six.

2 Tbs. unsalted butter
1/2 cup finely minced yellow onion
1 cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth
3/4 cup instant couscous
1/2 cup shelled unsalted pistachios, lightly toasted and coarsely chopped
1/4 cup dried cranberries
1/4 cup chopped dried apricots
1/4 cup chopped dried apples
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. ground ginger
2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 tsp. salt; more as needed
Freshly ground black pepper
6 Cornish game hens (about 1 1/2 lb. each), neck and giblets removed and discarded or saved for stock, hens rinsed and patted dry

FOR THE GLAZE:

2 Tbs. melted unsalted butter
Port-Spice or Orange-Spice Glaze from the sidebar at right

Make the stuffing—In a small skillet over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the onion and cook until soft, 5 to 7 min.; set aside. In a medium saucepan, bring the chicken broth to a boil; remove from the heat. Stir in the couscous, cover, and let sit off heat for 10 min. Fluff the couscous with a fork. Stir in the cooked onion, pistachios, cranberries, apricots, apples, cinnamon, ginger, parsley, salt, and pepper. Set aside to cool completely.

Stuff the hens—Heat the oven to 425°F. Season the cavity of each hen with salt and pepper. Make sure the stuffing is thoroughly cool and pack each hen loosely with about 1/2 cup of stuffing. With kitchen twine, tie each hen's legs together. Tuck the wings underneath. Arrange the hens breast side up on a wire rack set in a shallow roasting pan (or two) filled with 1/4 inch water (this will prevent the glaze drippings from smoking).

Glaze and roast the hens—Brush the 2 Tbs. melted butter over the hens; season with salt and pepper. Roast the hens for 20 min. Meanwhile, make the glaze, following the instructions at right. Brush the hens generously with the glaze and continue to roast, basting with more glaze every 10 min., until the juices run clear when you prick the thickest part of the thigh and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thigh registers 170°F, another 30 to 35 min. Transfer the hens to a platter, tent with foil, and let stand for 10 min. before serving.

Truffle-Scented Cornish Game Hens with Prosciutto & Wild Mushrooms

Earthy mushrooms and rich, heady truffle oil make this dish a holiday standout. For the wild mushrooms, I like



Glazed Cornish game hens for weeknight dinners

While glazes give a beautiful, burnished sheen that makes a stuffed bird even more special, they're also delicious on plain, unstuffed birds. Choose one glaze and follow the procedure for Glazed Roasted Cornish Game Hens with Couscous Stuffing at left. Skip over the stuffing instructions, skip brushing on the melted butter, and begin brushing on the glaze after 15 minutes of roasting. *Each recipe yields enough to glaze six 1 1/2-pound hens.*

Port-Spice Glaze

1 cup port
1/4 cup sugar
6 cinnamon sticks
12 whole cloves
12 slices fresh ginger
2 Tbs. unsalted butter

In a small saucepan, combine all the ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until reduced to 3/4 cup, about 3 min. Strain before using.

Orange-Spice Glaze

2 Tbs. coriander seeds
2 tsp. cumin seeds
1 1/2 cups orange juice
1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup honey
Strips of zest from 2 oranges (most easily removed with a vegetable peeler)
1/2 tsp. turmeric
Pinch cayenne
2 Tbs. unsalted butter

Heat a small, dry saucepan over medium-high heat, pour in the

coriander and cumin seeds, and stir and shake the pan until the seeds are fragrant, 30 to 60 seconds. Pulverize the seeds in a spice grinder or with a mortar and pestle. Put the ground seeds back into the saucepan along with the remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and cook until reduced to 3/4 cup, about 10 min.

Maple-Brandy Glaze

1 1/2 cups apple juice
1 Tbs. molasses
3 Tbs. pure maple syrup
1/4 cup Calvados, applejack, or other brandy
1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
1/2 tsp. ground allspice
2 Tbs. unsalted butter

In a small saucepan, boil the apple juice until reduced to 1/2 cup. Add the remaining ingredients and return to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until reduced to 3/4 cup, about 3 min.

to use a mix of chanterelles, porcini, and morels.
Serves six.

- 6 Cornish game hens (about 1½ lb. each), neck and giblets removed and discarded or saved for stock, hens rinsed and patted dry**
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 Tbs. unsalted butter
¾ lb. fresh wild mushrooms, finely chopped
1½ tsp. chopped fresh thyme
3 thin slices prosciutto (2 oz. total) cut into ¼-inch dice
3 Tbs. white truffle oil (see Sources, p. 98)

Season the cavity of each hen with salt and pepper. In a large skillet over medium heat, melt 1 Tbs. of the butter. Add the mushrooms and season with salt and a few grinds of pepper. Add the thyme and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms are soft and the juices have evaporated, 5 to 8 min. Transfer to a bowl to cool. Stir in the prosciutto and truffle oil.

Heat the oven to 425°F. Insert your fingertips at the wing end of the breast and gently loosen the skin over the breast and around the legs, being careful not to tear the skin. Divide the stuffing into six equal portions of about 2 Tbs. each. Place one portion of the stuffing under the skin and with your fingers, distribute it evenly over the breast and thigh. With kitchen twine, tie the legs together. Tuck the wings underneath. Repeat with each hen.

Arrange the birds breast side up on a wire rack set in a shallow roasting pan (or two). Melt the remaining 2 Tbs. butter and use half to brush over the hens. Season each hen with salt and pepper. Roast for 20 min. and brush with the remaining melted butter. Roast until the juices run clear when you prick the thickest part of the thigh and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thigh registers 170°F, another 25 to 30 min. Transfer the hens to a platter, tent with foil, and let stand for 10 min. before serving.

A game hen stuffed with wild rice and leeks is holiday fare that's traditional yet surprising, too.



A layer of tasty butter



Add flavor and keep the meat moist, too. When easing compound butter under the skin, work gently to avoid tearing.

Cornish Game Hens Stuffed with Wild Rice & Leeks

Some wild rice won't soak up all the cooking liquid even when it's fully cooked. If this is the case, just pour off the extra liquid and proceed with the recipe. Serves six.

- 5 Tbs. unsalted butter**
2 large or 3 medium leeks, the white and 1 inch of the light green portion cut into ½-inch dice, washed, and drained (to yield 2 cups)
¾ cup raw wild rice, rinsed and drained
1½ cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth
¾ cup water
½ tsp. salt; more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
½ lb. assorted wild mushrooms, wiped clean and chopped
2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
1 tsp. chopped fresh sage
6 Cornish game hens (about 1½ lb. each), neck and giblets removed and discarded or saved for stock, hens rinsed and patted dry

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt 2 Tbs. of the butter. Add the leeks and cook until soft, 10 to 12 min. Add the wild rice, chicken broth, water, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer gently without stirring until the rice is just tender, 40 to 45 min. If the rice is done and liquid remains, pour off the extra. Set aside.

Meanwhile, melt 1 Tbs. of the butter in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the mushrooms, parsley, thyme, and sage to the pan. Season with salt and



Tangerine butter under the skin
turns a simple hen into a succulent main course.

pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms are soft and have released their liquid, 3 to 5 min. Continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid has evaporated and the mushrooms are dry, 3 to 5 min. Stir the mushrooms into the rice and set aside to cool; you should have about 2 cups of stuffing.

Heat the oven to 425°F. Season the cavity of each hen with salt and pepper. Make sure the stuffing is thoroughly cool and pack the cavity of each hen loosely with about $\frac{2}{3}$ cup stuffing. With kitchen twine, tie the legs together. Tuck the wings underneath. Arrange the birds breast side up on a wire rack set in a shallow roasting pan (or two). Melt the remaining 2 Tbs. butter and use half to brush over the hens. Sprinkle them with salt and pepper. Roast for 20 min. Brush with the remaining melted butter. Continue to roast until the juices run clear when you prick the thickest part of the thigh and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thigh registers 170°F, another 25 to 30 min. Transfer the hens to a platter, tent with foil, and let stand for 10 min. before serving.

Roasted Cornish Game Hens with Tangerine-Herb Butter

Slipping butter under the skin is a great way to keep these game hens moist. After roasting, if the birds need additional crisping, run them under the broiler for just a few minutes. Serves six.

6 Cornish game hens (about 1½ lb. each), neck and giblets removed and discarded or saved for stock, hens rinsed and patted dry
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
½ cup fresh tangerine juice (from 1 or 2 tangerines)
8 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
2 shallots, finely minced

2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley; plus whole sprigs for serving
2 Tbs. snipped fresh chives
1 Tbs. chopped fresh oregano
2 Tbs. grated tangerine zest

Season the cavity of each hen with salt and pepper. In a small saucepan over medium high heat, reduce the tangerine juice until 1 Tbs. remains. Remove from the heat. In a small skillet over medium heat, melt 1 Tbs. of the butter. Add the shallots and cook, stirring, until soft, about 2 min. Remove from the heat. In a small bowl, mash together the shallots, reduced tangerine juice, parsley, chives, oregano, tangerine zest, and 5 Tbs. of the butter just until combined. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt; season with pepper. Transfer to the freezer for 5 min. to let the butter firm up. (If not using right away, refrigerate for up to three days.)

Heat the oven to 425°F. Insert your fingertips at the wing end of one of the game hen's breast and gently loosen the skin over the breast and around the legs, being careful not to tear the skin. Slip about 1 Tbs. of the tangerine butter under the skin, smearing it evenly over the breast and thighs. With kitchen twine, tie the legs together. Tuck the wings underneath. Repeat with each hen.

Arrange the hens breast side up on a wire rack set in a shallow roasting pan (or two). Melt the remaining 2 Tbs. butter and use half to brush over the hens. Season each hen with salt and pepper. Roast the hens for 20 min. Brush with the remaining melted butter. Continue to roast until the juices run clear when you prick the thickest part of the thigh and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thigh registers 170°F, another 20 to 25 min. Transfer the hens to a platter, tent with foil, and let stand for 10 min. Serve with a few parsley sprigs next to each hen.

Joanne Weir is the author of *More Cooking in the Wine Country*. She lives in San Francisco. ♦



Rösti Potatoes

This classic potato dish offers nutty flavor, crisp yet creamy texture, and above all—simplicity

BY MARTHA HOLMBERG

Rösti potatoes stand in all their crunchy glory as a shining example that, very often, less is more. Look to the end of this article and you'll see that the recipe ingredient list consists of potatoes, salt and pepper, and oil for cooking---can't get much shorter than that. Yet for me, one forkful of these nutty, crunchy, satisfying potatoes rivals a taste of just about any other dish in the world of potatoes.



It seems like most cuisines have their equivalent of this dish. I call them rösti potatoes, which is the Swiss version, just because it's fun and easy to say (ROOSH-tee or RAW-stee). The French call them *pommes paillasson* (which means straw doormat; see why I prefer rösti?), and Jewish cuisine has latkes, which are slightly different because of the usual addition of eggs, onions, and matzo meal. Regardless of



Large holes mean faster work, better texture.
A very finely grated potato could turn mushy during cooking.



Potato juice, anyone? You need to get rid of as much liquid as possible, so just squeeze small handfuls at a time.



Fill the pan gradually. Adding just a small amount at a time makes it easier to get an even layer.

origin, these cakes of grated, fried potatoes make a delicious side dish to a stew, chop, roast, or even other vegetables (last night we ate braised cabbage and rösti potatoes).

I've also been having fun lately using a small rösti as a base for other ingredients, almost like a pizza crust; see the sidebar on p. 52 for more ideas.

Please squeeze the potatoes

Though potatoes may seem to possess pretty minimal personality traits, there actually are big differences between varieties, and between ages.

I like to use Yukon Golds, medium- to high-starch potatoes that are easy to find and have a nutty flavor. If you can't find them, try a russet variety. Boiling potatoes aren't as starchy, and I find the texture of the finished rösti isn't as creamy in the middle. Pay attention to the season, too. The older a potato is, the more watery it will seem during cooking, as many of the starches that would otherwise absorb the potato's natural moisture will have converted to sugars.

No matter what the season, all potatoes contain a lot of water, so after grating, muster your great strength to squeeze out as much moisture as possible. I find that squeezing a small amount at a time in my hands works fine, but you could put the potatoes in a ricer or even twist them in a clean dishtowel.

Look out for hot spots

Once you put the potatoes in the pan, you don't want to disturb them as they cook, so you need to use a pan that doesn't have hot spots. The pan I use when I make a large rösti is a Circulon Professional, which is nonstick but very thick and heavy; a small cast-iron skillet would work pretty well, too, though sloped sides, not straight, make it easier to slide the potatoes in and out of the pan. For smaller röstis (which are

actually my favorite—more crunch per inch), I use a large All-Clad skillet or small black iron crêpe pans.

I use plenty of oil, and while I wish I could say "you can just use a light film of oil and everything works fine," I can't. You need enough oil to actually fry the outer layer of potatoes and to transfer the heat better to the inner layers. I don't add any more oil for the second side, however, so the first side is the prettiest and most crunchy, and the underside less so.

Don't rush your rösti

I've seen rösti recipes that start with parboiled potatoes, which would cook quickly, but I prefer starting with raw potatoes and letting them cook fully in the skillet. The outer layer gets much crunchier this way, and though it takes longer in actual frying time, it's much simpler—no need to dirty another pan. You need to adjust the heat so that the outside browns fully but slowly, giving the inside enough time to steam to completion. In other words, be patient and don't flip too soon. *Al dente* is not a good modifier for rösti potatoes. (Recipe follows)

To flip the rösti:
When the first side is finished, slide the rösti onto a dinner plate, set a second plate on top, hold the two tightly together, flip, and then...



To finish the rösti: ...slide the potatoes back into the still-hot pan. The side you cook first will be the prettiest, so be sure to serve it this way.

RECIPE

Crisp Rösti Potatoes

This is more of a process than a strict recipe, so just use my proportions and timing as a guide. Yields one 8-inch potato pancake or three to four 4-inch ones; serves three to four people as a side dish.

1 lb. potatoes (Yukon Golds or russets are best)
1½ tsp. salt
Generous ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
3 Tbs. vegetable or olive oil for frying; more as needed

Peel the potatoes and grate them, using the large holes of a hand grater or a food processor. Put the potatoes in a large bowl, add the salt and pepper, and toss to coat thoroughly. Let the potatoes rest for at least 5 min., and then, working with a fistful at a time, squeeze as much liquid as possible out of them and transfer to a second bowl. (The potatoes will start to discolor, but that won't really affect the final results.)

To make one large rösti—Heat a heavy-based skillet that measures about 8 inches across the base over medium-high heat. Add the oil (it should come to a depth of about ⅛ inch; add more if necessary.)

When the oil begins to ripple and quiver slightly, test it by dropping in a potato shred—it should sizzle enthusiastically. If not, wait a few more seconds. When the temperature is right, take a fistful of potatoes, wring it out once more, and let it fall loosely from your fingers into the center of the pan. (Be careful because the oil will spatter; getting hit by a few tiny droplets is inevitable.)

Working quickly, repeat until you've got enough potatoes in the pan to cover the bottom. With a fork, gently spread out the shreds of potato to make a layer about ½ inch thick, trying to distribute them evenly, avoiding dense or thin patches. If there are straggly potatoes around the edges, tuck them in with the fork also so they don't burn.

Adjust the heat so that you hear a lively sizzle but the bottom isn't browning too rapidly. Cook until the underside is a deep golden brown and the potatoes on the top are starting to look translucent, 12 to 16 min. (Taste a few strands—they should be almost fully cooked and tender.)

If you're confident enough to just flip the rösti in the pan, go for it—it's quick and efficient. If you're not, carefully slide the rösti out of the pan onto a dinner plate and return the pan to the heat. Put another plate on top of the rösti and, holding tightly, flip the plates over. Slide the inverted rösti back into the pan and continue cooking until the new bottom is browned and the potatoes feel really tender in the middle when poked with a knife (try to snitch a few strands from the center and taste them for doneness), another 6 to 8 min. Slide the rösti onto a cutting board if you're serving it immediately, or to a cooling rack to hold it for a few minutes. Blot the top with a paper towel to remove any excess oil. Cut into wedges and serve as soon as possible.

To make individual röstis—Follow the directions above, but just drop handfuls of potatoes into the pan to create 4-inch rounds that are about ¼ inch thick. Use a spatula to flip the rounds rather than sliding them onto a plate. Drain these small rösti on paper towels for a few seconds before serving.

Tasty partners for rösti potatoes

Turn an individual rösti into a whole meal by topping it with other ingredients, like these:

- ◆ Smoked salmon, mixed greens tossed in olive oil and fresh lemon juice, and a dollop of sour cream seasoned with chopped fresh dill, chives, grated lemon zest, salt, and lots of freshly ground black pepper.
- ◆ Fried or poached egg, warmed-up salsa, sour cream, and a shower of chopped fresh cilantro.
- ◆ Tender raw spinach leaves tossed in a vinaigrette, halved

cherry tomatoes, crumbled blue cheese, and crisp fried bacon or pancetta.

- ◆ Several thin slices of seared steak tossed with arugula leaves moistened with a little olive oil, flavored by a generous squeeze of lemon at the last minute.
- ◆ Thinly sliced Savoy cabbage and onions, braised in a little dry white wine and chicken broth, flavored with a few crushed cumin seeds and a sprig of thyme, and topped with a few slices of pan-fried sausage.

Martha Holmberg is the editor-in-chief of Fine Cooking. She learned to make röstis at La Varenne Cooking School in Paris. ♦

Winter Root Vegetables Make Warming Side Dishes

BY MOLLY STEVENS

These root vegetables were all roasted together, and they all came out tender. The secret is to cut longer-cooking ones smaller.



In the fall, when summer vegetables have withered in the garden and vanished from local farmstands and markets, I eagerly turn my attention to the bins of roots that start to appear at market. Knobby, gnarly, bulbous, shaggy—root vegetables may not be the beauty queens of the produce aisle, but they sure do reign supreme in the kitchen. Their flavors range from sweet and mellow to



A knobby root like celeriac needs to be peeled with a knife rather than a vegetable peeler.

"The real fun of cooking these brutes is in coaxing out their sweet, deep flavor," says Molly Stevens.



peppery and sharp to nutty and earthy. And their dense, dry flesh is the ultimate for cooking up soulful, satisfying cold-weather vegetable dishes, such as purées, gratins, soups, and roasted medleys.

Winter root vegetables are great keepers

Unlike most aboveground vegetables, winter roots store really well. When they grow to full maturity, root vegetables develop tough protective skins that keep them from spoiling during storage. This makes it easy to keep a stash on hand—something I find especially convenient when short days and cold winds make a trip to the market much less appealing.

Buying and storing. When buying winter roots, look for them to be firm and heavy with no signs of sprouting or shriveling. If they're light for their size, chances are they've been stored improperly or for too long and they may be spongy or dried out. Look for fairly evenly shaped specimens—overly twisted or irregularly shaped roots may be excessively tough, fibrous, and even bitter. Avoid roots that are split or gashed as well as those with soft or damp spots. Early root vegetables (especially beets and carrots, and sometimes turnips) are routinely sold with their greens attached. The leaves are a good sign of freshness in general, but look specifically for the brightest and greenest bunch. For root vegetables without

Ideas for roasted roots

- ◆ Roasted rutabaga tossed with brown butter and chives.
- ◆ Antipasto salad of roasted carrots and shallots with prosciutto, fresh mint, and balsamic vinegar.
- ◆ Roasted celeriac tossed with *crème fraîche*, topped with breadcrumbs and Gruyère cheese, and gratinéed.
- ◆ A frittata of roasted potatoes, goat cheese, and basil.
- ◆ Fettuccine tossed with roasted turnips, arugula, toasted walnuts, and your best olive oil.
- ◆ Roasted beets on a spinach salad with a crumbled bacon and caraway seed dressing.

their greens, the stem end (where the greens once were) is the first place to show signs of spoilage, so check closely.

Store root vegetables loosely in a bag in your refrigerator's produce drawer. The idea is to keep them dry, cool, and in the dark. If there are greens attached, trim them off before storing; save any beet greens or turnip greens to cook separately. Don't wash root vegetables before storing, as any moisture can promote spoilage. Expect them to last eight to twelve days before they begin to show any signs of deterioration. Rutabagas are often waxed and so will last closer to two weeks.

Soups, mashes, gratins, and roasts

The pleasure of cooking root vegetables comes in coaxing their dense texture into creamy tenderness and bringing out their inherent sweetness and depth of flavor in different ways.

For mashed or puréed root vegetables, simmer until tender. Possibly the simplest way to transform the dense, starchy character of root vegetables into a toothsome dish is to simmer them until tender and then purée them until smooth.

While single-vegetable soups and mashes are often just the thing, I've also found that combining them works well. Carrots and parsnips have a natural affinity to each other; rutabagas and turnips can pair up wonderfully. And one of the best partners for puréed roots is their underground cousin, the potato. Because of their super-high starch content, potatoes help add body and thickness to purées. Use russet or Yukon Gold potatoes (rather than low-starch waxy varieties, such as Red Bliss or fingerlings) and keep the proportion of potatoes equal to or less than the weight of roots to let the true flavor of the root vegetable come through.

For hearty root vegetable gratins, slice, layer, and bake. The roots most suited to this technique are the starchier ones—celeriac, rutabagas, parsnips, large turnips—because their starch mingles with the cooking liquid to create a thickened, creamy gratin. (In fact, the starch is so integral to this technique that most cooks layer in a potato or two for good measure, as I've done in the Potato & Rutabaga Gratin on p. 57.)

While a mandoline makes quick work of slicing, a sharp knife is a perfectly fine alternative. The thinner you slice the vegetable ($\frac{1}{8}$ inch and less), the more the gratin will meld during baking into something altogether uniform and creamy. The thicker the slices (closer to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch), the more the slices will remain separate even after baking.

For the richest and creamiest gratin, go for light or heavy cream. I live in New England, where cooks favor milk—the gratin won't be as thick or unctuous, but it will be tasty. And finally, for a still leaner alternative, try chicken broth. No matter which liquid you choose, it should be hot when you pour it over the vegetables, and you can enhance the flavor by first simmering it with a few sprigs of herbs or garlic cloves or both.

The strong, dry heat of roasting brings out the natural sweetness in root vegetables like no other method. Roast a single variety or a medley. To achieve a roasty brown color and flavor, use a rimmed baking sheet, a jellyroll pan, or a low-sided roasting pan. High-sided roasting pans shield the vegetables from the direct oven heat and won't give you much browning.

RECIPES

Celeriac & Yukon Gold Purée

The little bit of horseradish (another fine root!) brightens up this earthy mash, which makes a great side dish for a pork roast or chops. The best way to peel celeriac is with a sharp paring knife. For a smooth purée, use a ricer or food mill. You can make this with a hand-held potato masher, but it will be lumpy and decidedly rustic. *Serves eight.*

1½ lb. celeriac (1 large or 2 small), peeled and roughly chopped
1½ lb. Yukon Gold or russet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
1 Tbs. plus 1½ tsp. coarse salt
¾ cup milk or half-and-half
3 Tbs. unsalted butter
2 Tbs. grated fresh or prepared horseradish, or to taste
Fresh lemon juice to taste (I use 1 scant tsp.)
Freshly ground white pepper

Put the celeriac and potatoes in a pot, cover with water by at least an inch, and add 1 Tbs. of the salt. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium, cover



partway, and cook until very tender, 20 to 25 min. Drain. Return the vegetables to the pot and set it over medium heat for 1 to 2 min., shaking and stirring to evaporate any excess water. Rinse a small saucepan in cold water (this will make the pan easier to clean later); pour in the milk (or half-and-half). Bring to just below a simmer over medium heat; set aside. Force the vegetables through a ricer or food mill and return them to the boiling pot. Beat in the butter with a wooden spoon. Add the milk to the potatoes a little at a time, beating vigorously after each addition. Stir in the horseradish and lemon juice. Add the remaining 1½ tsp. salt, season with pepper, and serve.

These mashed potatoes have a secret ingredient. They're puréed with celeriac, which gives them an earthy, satisfying depth.

Parsnip & Leek Soup

The sweetness of the parsnips is offset by a healthy splash of dry sherry—if all you have is sweet sherry, substitute dry white wine. The croutons add a fine contrast of crunchy texture to this silky-smooth soup. Tie the thyme, bay leaves, and peppercorns together in a leftover leek green if you don't have any cheesecloth. For a richer, more elegant soup, add the cream



Croutons add texture to a silky soup of parsnips and leeks.

to finish—although I like the purity of flavor that you get without the cream. *Yields about 7 cups; serves six to eight.*

FOR THE CROUTONS:

**1/3 cup olive oil
3 or 4 slices of fine-crumb white bread (I like Pepperidge Farm), crusts removed and cut into 1/2-inch cubes**

FOR THE SOUP:

**2 Tbs. olive oil
3 cups chopped leeks, white and light green parts only (from 2 to 3 large leeks), rinsed and drained
1 tsp. coarse salt; more to taste
1 lb. parsnips, peeled, quartered, and cut into 1-inch pieces
1/4 cup dry sherry (fino) or dry white wine
6 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth
3 sprigs fresh thyme
2 small bay leaves, broken in half
1/2 tsp. white peppercorns, lightly crushed
1/4 cup heavy cream (optional)
2 Tbs. chopped fresh thyme, for garnish**

Make the croutons—Heat the 1/3 cup oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the bread cubes and fry, tossing and stirring, until crisp and golden on all sides. Drain on paper towels.

Make the soup—Heat the 2 Tbs. oil in a wide soup pot over medium heat. Add the leeks, season lightly with salt, and cook gently until the leeks have softened and just begin to turn golden, 8 to 10 min. Add the parsnips and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the parsnips are fragrant, about 2 min. Add the sherry, increase the heat to medium high, and cook until most of the liquid has evaporated. Add the broth. Tie the thyme sprigs, bay leaves, and peppercorns

together in a cheesecloth sachet and toss it into the pot. Partially cover the pot, bring to a boil, immediately lower the heat, and simmer partially covered until the parsnips are soft enough to mash against the side of the pot with a wooden spoon. Remove from the heat and let cool for about 5 min. Discard the sachet. Using a stand or hand blender, purée the soup in batches, being sure to combine a mix of broth and solids in each batch. If you're using a stand blender, fill it no more than two-thirds full and be sure to vent the blender so the top doesn't pop off (either remove the lid's pop-out center or lift one edge of the lid and drape with a clean towel). Rinse the soup pot, return the blended soup to the pot, taste, and adjust the seasonings. If you're using the cream, add it now (if you're making the soup ahead, wait to add the cream until you reheat the soup just before serving). Garnish each bowl with croutons and a pinch of fresh thyme.

Roasted Medley of Winter Roots

Vary this recipe according to the vegetables in your bin and the number of people you're feeding. Just be sure to cut the vegetables so they roast at an even rate: Quick-cooking, higher-moisture roots like carrots, turnips, parsnips, and potatoes should be left larger, while dense, slow-cooking types like beets, celeriac, and rutabagas should be cut into smallish chunks. You should have about 1 1/2 to 2 cups each of parsnips, carrots, beets, and turnips. Red beets give the paler vegetables a pretty pink tinge, while golden beets, which are also nice, won't bleed onto the other vegetables. In place of the butter and oil, you can use all olive oil or all clarified butter. *Serves six.*

**1/2 lb. parsnips, peeled and cut into 2x1/2-inch sticks
3 to 4 carrots, peeled and cut into 2x1/2-inch sticks
2 medium turnips, peeled and cut into large wedges
3 medium beets, peeled and cut into large (3/4-inch) dice
10 to 12 cloves garlic
12 to 15 small white boiling onions or 1 cup pearl onions (walnut-size), peeled
3 sprigs fresh rosemary or thyme
3 small bay leaves**

Choosing and handling

Turnips

Winter turnips will be larger than their spring and summer counterparts. Be sure the skin is taut and the vegetable feels plump.

Beets

Look for smooth skins and tails that aren't too shaggy. Red beets will stain your hands, cutting board, and dish-towels.

2½ Tbs. melted unsalted butter

1½ Tbs. vegetable oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oven to 400°F. Dump the vegetables into a large, low-sided roasting pan or onto a heavy, rimmed baking sheet; they should be just one layer deep. Toss in the herbs and drizzle on the butter and oil. Season with salt and pepper and toss to coat the vegetables evenly. Roast, tossing with a spatula a few times, until the vegetables are very tender and browned in spots, about 50 min. Discard the bay leaves. Serve warm.

Potato & Rutabaga Gratin with Blue Cheese

While rutabagas taste and behave a lot like turnips, they're nuttier, less peppery, and creamier, which is why I prefer them in gratins. The easiest way to peel a rutabaga—especially a waxed one—is with a sharp paring knife. Use a very sharp knife or a mandoline to slice the rutabaga and potatoes. *Serves six to eight.*

3 cups heavy cream

2 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed

1 bay leaf

2 hearty sprigs fresh thyme

Pinch freshly grated nutmeg

3 Tbs. melted unsalted butter; more butter for the foil

1 medium rutabaga (about 1½ lb.), peeled, quartered, and very thinly sliced

2 to 3 russet potatoes (about 1½ lb.), peeled and very thinly sliced

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

4 oz. blue cheese, such as *Maytag*, *Roquefort*, or *Bleu d'Auvergne*, crumbled

3 Tbs. fresh breadcrumbs, toasted (see Basics, p. 92)

Heat the oven to 375°F. Rinse a small saucepan in cold water (this will make the pan easier to clean later), add the cream, garlic, bay leaf, thyme, and nutmeg. Bring to just below a simmer over medium heat, remove from the heat, cover, and set aside to infuse for about 30 min.

Brush a large gratin dish or 3-qt. flameproof casserole dish with a little of the melted butter. Arrange half



of the rutabaga slices in the bottom of the dish, followed by half of the potato slices. Season with salt and pepper. Dot the surface with the blue cheese. Continue with another layer of rutabaga slices and a final layer of potatoes. Season the top with salt and pepper. Strain the seasoned cream over the top. In a small bowl, combine the breadcrumbs with the remaining melted butter and sprinkle over the top. Butter the dull side of a large sheet of foil and cover the gratin. Bake for 40 min., remove the foil, and continue to bake until the top is browned, the sides are bubbly, and the potatoes are tender when pierced, another 30 to 40 min. Let sit for 10 min. before serving.

Molly Stevens, a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*, co-wrote *One Potato, Two Potato* with Roy Finamore. ♦

For the neatest servings, let Potato & Rutabaga Gratin sit for at least 10 minutes before slicing.

root vegetables

Carrots

Avoid those tinged with green—they can be bitter.

Cut very large carrots and parsnips in half lengthwise and look at the core. If it looks dramatically distinct from the rest of the carrot or parsnip, pry it out with the tip of a sturdy paring knife. A woody core is fibrous and unpleasant.

Parsnips

Look for medium-size parsnips. Avoid any very slender, small ones, because they make for a lot of peeling and not a lot of parsnip.

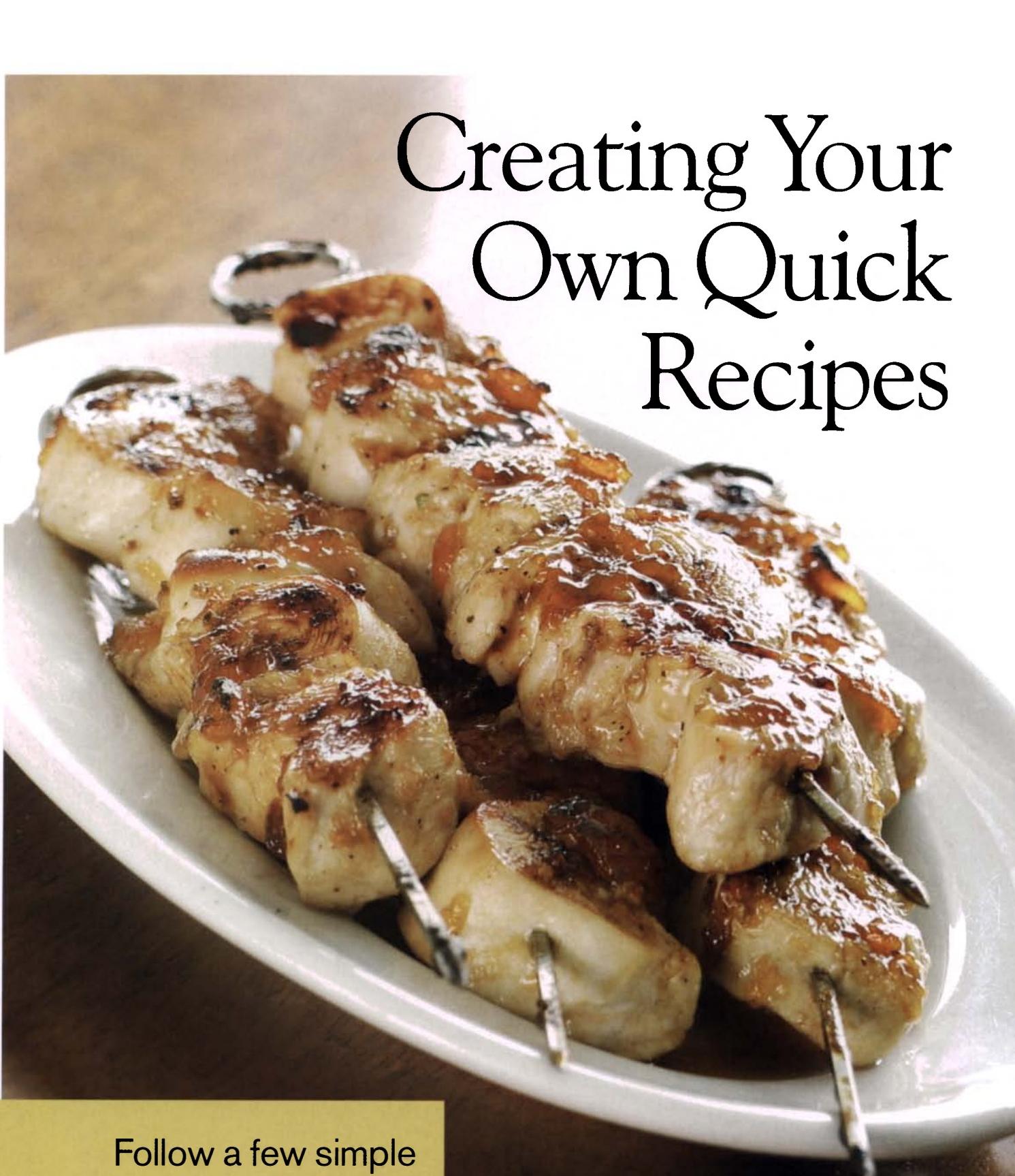
Rutabagas

These bulbous beauties that look and taste like giant turnips are typically coated with a thick layer of wax. The wax extends the shelf life, and you'll peel it off with the skin before cooking.

Celeriac

Also called celery root. Choose those about the size of a baseball; larger ones can be woody or spongy inside. If you're peeling and cutting celeriac more than 15 minutes before you plan to cook it, drop it into a bowl of water with a squeeze of lemon to keep it from turning brown.

Creating Your Own Quick Recipes



Follow a few simple guidelines to develop your own weeknight recipes

Chicken Brochettes with Apricot Glaze

BY LISA ZWIRN

When *The Boston Globe* asked me to develop quick recipes for its Wednesday food section about a year ago, I jumped at the opportunity. For me, it was like killing two birds with one stone. I had to make dinner for my family most weeknights anyway, and cooking it in under an hour is always my goal. Now all I had to do was write down what I did. As I've cooked for my family and my newspaper audience, I've learned some effective strategies for creating delicious meals that have wide appeal and can be put on the table quickly to accommodate our hectic schedules.

I developed a set of guidelines you can follow at home, too. I call them my "four Cs": Start with a **center food**, such as poultry, fish, meat, pasta, or a grain; choose an appropriate **quick cooking method**; add a few key flavor **complements**; and take advantage of a few well-chosen **convenience foods**. If you consider these four guidelines, you'll find creating your own quick recipes to be quite simple. It also helps to be an avid recipe reader—you'll develop a good sense for cutting out extraneous ingredients and for taking shortcuts.

Choose tender cuts and small shapes for your "center" food

When thinking about your main ingredient, you can eliminate certain foods from the start because they take too long to cook, such as large cuts of meat like roast beef, pork loin, a whole chicken, even meatloaf. Instead, choose small, tender cuts like pork chops or chicken breasts, or cut larger cuts into smaller pieces. Just be sure that whatever you choose can cook in a short amount of time and remain tender.

You can't roast a leg of lamb in under an hour, but you can grill or broil skewered cubes of lamb (rubbed with garlic and rosemary) in 15 to 20 minutes. A butterflied leg of lamb can be grilled in less than 30 minutes. Roasting a whole chicken is better saved for a night when you have more time, but sautéing boneless chicken breasts (and making a quick pan sauce) or stir-frying small chunks of chicken with vegetables (and adding store-bought hoisin sauce) are simple, flavorful quick dishes. Just remember that while small pieces of food cook more quickly, they also overcook quickly, so watch them closely. Pasta is easy and fast, and your own quick homemade tomato sauce or toppings of sautéed vegetables are tastier than most prepared sauces.

To design a quick recipe...

Pick a main ingredient that will cook quickly



Use a few boldly flavored accents



Choose a quick cooking method



Don't forget about handy pantry items

The quickest cooking methods use high heat

Sautéing, stir-frying, high-heat roasting, or broiling are all fast cooking methods. Grilling can be fast, too, if you have a gas grill. What you want to avoid is baking, braising, or stewing. These techniques produce tender and delicious foods, but they perform their magic slowly. Once you choose your cooking method, think about side dishes and get them started. Since your main dish will cook quickly, you'll want your side dishes well under way before you start the entrée. Put the water on to boil for pasta, or get a rice pilaf started. Start boiling, steaming, or roasting potatoes or vegetables.

For flavor "complements," limit yourself to the few and the bold

A few vivid flavors speak volumes. Take the recipe for chicken with gremolata on p. 61; it's a perfect

Stock your pantry with "quick" ingredients...

...and you'll always have tomorrow's meal in the making.

In the pantry:

anchovies
artichoke hearts (canned or frozen)
beans (canned)
bouillon cubes
broth or stock
chipotles (canned in adobo sauce)
couscous
dried chiles
dried fruits
dried mushrooms
garlic
hoisin sauce
oils: olive, canola, vegetable, peanut, toasted sesame
olives
onions

pasta

potatoes

rice

roasted red peppers

salsa

shallots

soy sauce

spices and dried herbs

sun-dried tomatoes

tomatoes (canned: whole, diced, crushed, sauce, paste)

tuna

vinegars: balsamic, sherry, rice, white and red-wine

wasabi

water chestnuts

In the fridge or freezer:

bacon or pancetta
capers
feta cheese
fresh herbs
ginger
horseradish
lemons
limes
mayonnaise
mustards: Dijon and grainy
parmigiano reggiano
pesto
preserves
sour cream
tortillas
vegetables

If it's heat—as in spice—you're seeking, there are many quick options, including chili or cayenne powder, a small amount of canned chipotle chiles (one of my favorites), crushed red chile flakes, wasabi, or horseradish. Each lends its particular nuance along with fiery heat.

Good-quality convenience products aren't taboo

There's nothing wrong with using products like oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, bottled roasted red peppers, canned beans, canned tomatoes, or frozen vegetables like peas and corn. Find the brands you like best and keep them on hand as part of your quick pantry (see the sidebar at left). Keep plenty of dried pasta, a variety of grains, different kinds of oils and vinegars, and condiments like mustards and preserves on hand. They'll all help you save time (in both preparation and cooking) and add flavor.

Once you start developing your own quick recipes, don't forget to write them down. In the meantime, I've provided some sample recipes to get you started. Using the same main ingredient—chicken breasts—I've shown how a few quick cooking methods and a few carefully chosen flavors can make three different quick meals.

RECIPES

Chicken Brochettes with Apricot Glaze

This chicken is as delicious cold as it is hot. I often make twice the recipe and use the leftovers in a chicken salad. Serves four.

¾ cup (about 8 oz.) apricot preserves (if very chunky, mince or process)

1 Tbs. minced garlic (from about 2 large cloves)

1½ Tbs. balsamic vinegar

1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

1¼ lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts

4 or 5 metal skewers (8 to 10 inches long)

½ tsp. salt

Freshly ground black pepper

For electric ovens, position one of your oven racks up high, so that a baking sheet with a rack on it will allow the brochettes to be within a few inches of the broiler element. Heat the broiler. In a small mixing bowl, combine the apricot preserves, garlic, vinegar, and oil. Mash any apricot chunks with a fork. Transfer ¼ cup of the glaze in a small cup to brush on the cooked chicken.

Slice the chicken breasts crosswise into four or five 1-inch-thick strips. Fold each strip and insert a skewer so that it goes through the strip twice. (This will prevent the pieces from falling off the skewers.) Thread four or five strips on each skewer, but don't push them together too tightly. Season the chicken with the salt and pepper and brush all over with the apricot glaze. Line a

example of "less is more." Just three bold flavors—lemon zest, garlic, and parsley—liven up a simple sauté of chicken. Don't be tempted to layer on a lot of ingredients to a recipe, since the goal is to minimize preparation and cooking time.

Stock your kitchen with plenty of aromatic vegetables (onions, shallots, scallions, fresh ginger, and garlic), herbs (good keepers like parsley, rosemary, and thyme), and spices (like cumin, coriander, fennel seed, chile flakes, and curry powder), and you'll be able to add bold flavors to main dishes with just a few ingredients. Here are some easy ways to add flavor fast:

To brighten a dish quickly, fresh herbs can be sprinkled onto soups, pastas, or sauces at the end of cooking, instead of using more subtle ingredients that require lengthy cooking to coax out their flavors.

For a touch of acidity, a last-minute drizzle of vinegar or lemon or lime juice often works better than wine; the latter requires reduction (which takes time) before tasting just right.

To make sweet and savory combinations, you rarely need more than two or three ingredients. In the recipe for chicken brochettes at right, apricot preserves provides just the right amount of fruity sweetness when mixed with garlic and balsamic vinegar in a marinade (and glaze) for chicken.

If you like salty flavors, ingredients that especially complement chicken, fish, and tomato-based sauces include feta cheese (creamy-salty), Parmesan (nutty-salty), bacon or pancetta (smoky-salty) and olives (earthy-salty).

baking sheet with foil and put a rack on the sheet. Space the skewers evenly on the rack.

Broil the brochettes, turning every 3 to 4 min. so they cook and brown evenly, for a total of about 10 to 12 min. Don't let them burn or the outside will be dry and stringy. Cut into a thick piece to make sure it's cooked through and no pinkness remains. Transfer the brochettes to a serving plate, brush with the re-served glaze (use a clean brush or spoon), and serve.

Sautéed Chicken Breasts with Gremolata

A simple mixture of parsley, lemon zest, and garlic, gremolata is the vibrantly flavored garnish traditionally sprinkled over braised veal shanks in the Italian dish called *osso buco*. Here, it's stirred into a pan sauce, which gives the chicken a wonderful lift. Serves four.

1/3 cup packed finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest

1 large clove garlic, minced

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 6 oz. each)

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Flour for coating the chicken

2 Tbs. canola oil

1 cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth

1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

In a small bowl, combine the parsley, lemon zest, and garlic; set aside. Sprinkle the chicken with salt and pepper and coat both sides with flour. In a large, heavy skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. When it's very hot, add the chicken and brown on both sides, 3 to 4 min. per side. Transfer the chicken to a plate. Pour the broth and lemon juice into the skillet and boil for 1 min., stirring with a wooden spoon to scrape up all the browned bits. Return the chicken to the pan, lower the heat to medium, cover, and simmer until the chicken is cooked through, 3 to 5 min. (Total cooking time will depend on the thickness of the breasts; cut into one to see if it's done.) Transfer the chicken to a serving plate. Stir the gremolata into the pan sauce. Spoon the sauce over the chicken and serve at once.

Hoisin Chicken Stir-Fry

Using store-bought hoisin sauce makes this chicken stir-fry easy and fast. You can substitute any quick-cooking vegetable, such as mushrooms, thinly sliced carrots, or broccoli florets. Rice completes the meal. Serves four.

3 Tbs. vegetable or peanut oil

1 medium onion, cut in half and sliced

1 red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and thinly sliced

1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 3/4-inch chunks

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

6 oz. snow peas, trimmed

Crushed red chile flakes

1 to 2 tsp. minced fresh ginger (optional)

1/3 cup hoisin sauce

2 Tbs. water

1/3 cup dry-roasted peanuts or cashews

Heat 2 Tbs. of the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook for 2 to 3 min.



Add the bell pepper and cook until both the pepper and onion are browned around the edges, 4 to 6 min.

Remove the vegetables from the skillet; set aside.

Pour the remaining 1 Tbs. oil in the skillet. Sprinkle the chicken with salt and pepper, add it to the oil, and cook, stirring frequently, so that all sides brown, 2 to 3 min. Stir in the snow peas and sprinkle in some red chile flakes. Add the ginger, if using.

Reduce the heat to medium low and stir in the hoisin sauce and water. Simmer for 1 min. to wilt the snow peas and finish cooking the chicken (don't overcook it). Sprinkle with the peanuts or cashews and serve over rice.

Lisa Zwirn has written for The Boston Globe, as well as for Pastry Art & Design and Chile Pepper magazines. ♦

Savory Roasted Nuts

These sweet and spicy snacks are the perfect pre-dinner nosh

BY BARBARA J. WITT

If there's one thing I always keep on hand during the holidays, it's a stash of roasted nuts, seasoned in a variety of ways. When friends drop by, a bowl of Spicy Maple Walnuts, Malabar Pecans, or Parmesan Almonds makes the perfect snack with cocktails. I also like to pack the nuts into decorative tins or jars and give them as gifts.

Make it a cardinal rule to start these recipes with high-quality nuts. Search out a bulk purveyor, like a natural-foods store, where you can see if the nuts look shriveled, meaning they're old. Nut oils are especially perishable and can quickly turn rancid, so try to taste before you buy. If you're not using the nuts within a few days, refrigerate them for up to two weeks or freeze them for up to six months.

The challenge in making seasoned nuts is getting the seasonings to stick. Egg whites do a thorough and even job of this, although the resulting heavy and opaque coating somewhat obscures the look of the nut. Melted butter is the other option; the result is a glossy, oiled nut with a lighter dusting of seasoning. The butter option also gives you the flexibility to either roast or microwave the nuts. The microwave is quicker, but the oven gives you crisper texture and richer, toastier flavor and color. Either way, once you try my recipes, you can vary the flavors and create your own signature savory nut.

Barbara Witt is the author Great Food without Fuss.



Spicy Maple Walnuts

These nuts continue to toast a bit from the intense heat of the glaze, so don't overbake them. Leave the ginger slices in the nut mixture for a delicious surprise. Pecans or hazelnuts are also great this way. Yields 4 cups.

4 Tbs. unsalted butter
½ cup pure maple syrup
6 quarter-size slices fresh ginger, halved
1 Tbs. water
1 tsp. ground ginger
1 tsp. salt
¼ tsp. Tabasco, or to taste
1 lb. (4 cups) shelled walnuts

In a conventional oven—Heat the oven to 300°F. Combine all the ingredients except the nuts in a small saucepan and slowly simmer over low heat for 2 to 3 min. Put the nuts in a bowl, pour the glaze over them, and stir and toss to coat them with the glaze. Line a jellyroll pan with foil and spread the nuts in a single layer on it. Bake for 30 to 40 min., stirring at 15- and then 10-min. intervals. When the nuts look light and almost dry as you toss them, they're done. Don't touch them; the caramelized sugar is extremely hot. Slide the foil onto a rack and let the nuts cool completely.

In a microwave—Put the butter in the largest shallow dish that fits in your microwave. Heat on high for 1 min. to melt the butter. Add the remaining ingredients except the nuts and heat for 3 min. on high. Stir to combine. Add the nuts, stirring and tossing to coat them with the glaze. Microwave on high for up to 9 min., stirring at 2-min. and then 1-min. intervals to redistribute the coating and prevent scorching. When all the liquid has caramelized, they're done. Don't touch them; the caramelized sugar is extremely hot. Carefully slide the nuts onto a foil-lined rack to cool.

For either method—Store in airtight containers or plastic freezer bags.



Malabar Pecans

All nuts burn easily because of their high oil content. Be vigilant and test frequently for doneness. The beckoning aroma of well-roasted nuts will signal their rescue. Taste the nuts when they're cool and adjust the seasonings with a final light dusting of spices. *Yields 4 cups.*

4 Tbs. unsalted butter
2 Tbs. canola oil
1 Tbs. Madras curry powder
2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ground cumin
1/4 tsp. cayenne
1 lb. (4 cups) shelled pecans

In a conventional oven—Heat the oven to 300°F. Heat all the ingredients except the nuts in a small saucepan over medium heat to release the flavors and dissolve the salt. Pour the mixture into a large bowl and add the nuts. Toss and stir the nuts to coat them thoroughly. Spread them in a single layer on a foil-lined jellyroll pan. Bake for 30 min., stirring well every 10 min., until the nuts are deeply browned. Slide the foil out of the pan onto a cooling rack and let the nuts cool completely.

In a microwave—Put all the ingredients except the nuts in the largest shallow dish that fits in your microwave. Heat on high for 1 min. to release the flavors and melt the butter. Stir to combine. Add the nuts, tossing and stirring to thoroughly coat them. Toast the nuts on high for 6 min., stirring well at 2-min. intervals to redistribute the seasonings. Rotate the dish occasionally if your microwave doesn't have a carousel. Spread the nuts on a length of foil to cool.

For either method—Store in airtight containers or plastic freezer bags.



Almonds with Parmesan, Rosemary & Fennel

A combination of blanched and skin-on almonds gives this mix great eye appeal. *Yields 3 cups.*

Olive oil for the pan
1 Tbs. chopped fresh rosemary leaves
2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. fennel seed
1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
2 egg whites
1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 lb. (1 1/2 cups) blanched almonds
1/2 lb. (1 1/2 cups) skin-on almonds

Heat the oven to 300°F. Line a jellyroll pan with foil and spray or brush lightly with olive oil.

Grind the rosemary, salt, fennel, and pepper in a spice mill to a fine powder, or mince the rosemary and grind the mixture in a mortar and pestle. In a large bowl, whisk the egg whites until they foam. Add the spices and cheese. Whisk again to combine. Add the nuts, stirring and tossing to thoroughly coat them. Spread them in a single layer on the foil-lined pan. Bake for 45 min., stirring every 15 min. to redistribute the coating. The nuts will stick to the foil at first and need to be gently pried loose to expose them evenly to the heat. Slide the nuts, on the foil, onto a rack to cool.

Store in screw-top jars or airtight tins; plastic may cause the crisp coating to soften. ♦



Enjoying

Crisp Duck Legs with Sautéed Potatoes

Many people have seen duck confit on bistro menus, but not too many cooks, in the States anyway, have made it at home. This is a situation I hope to change since duck confit is delicious, easy to make, and surprisingly versatile. I'm such an advocate of this traditional French dish because with just a few pantry staples and this deceptively simple ingredient, I can cook up flavorful dishes in very little time. I use it in the same ways I might use some special sausage or ham: as a rich and delicious main dish, but even more often as a highly effective condiment.

Like most people, I was introduced to duck confit at a restaurant. The confit was so complex and sumptuous that I assumed it had to be as difficult to make as it was delicious to eat. But my stomach urged me to investigate, and I'm glad I did. Not only is confit simple to make, it's also so versatile that it can star in traditional French dishes like cassoulet (see p. 76) just as easily as it can add a special note to more casual dishes like salads, risottos, or stews.

My focus is on flavor, not shelf-life

Confit (pronounced kohn-FEE) comes from the French *confire*, meaning "to preserve." Duck confit is

duck that has been cured with salt and then gently cooked in its own fat. The duck emerges meltingly tender with a rich, slightly salty but mellow flavor—there's nothing quite like it.

You'll see recipes for confit that instruct you to store the duck in the fat and keep it in the fridge for months. In fact, long storage was traditionally the chief benefit of this cooking method, guaranteeing the availability of meats, including goose and pork, in the absence of refrigeration. But today's food safety standards would suggest not keeping homemade confit for too long, even refrigerated. That's fine with me: Its flavor and texture are so good, I can't imagine duck confit lasting more than a few days around my house. Also, I prefer the flavor and texture of freshly made confit. In recipes that will include the skin (like my Crisp Duck Legs with Sautéed Potatoes, p. 66), fresh duck confit performs better because the skin gets crisper. I like to start with the duck leg recipe the day I make the confit and then try a lighter dish, like the salad on p. 66, during the following week, when I want a quick midweek meal that still has pizzazz.

Although there are several steps to making confit, and you do need to plan 24 hours ahead, each step is

Duck Confit

Try this easy-to-make ingredient in classic French dishes or in lighter contemporary fare

BY KATE NOWELL-SMITH

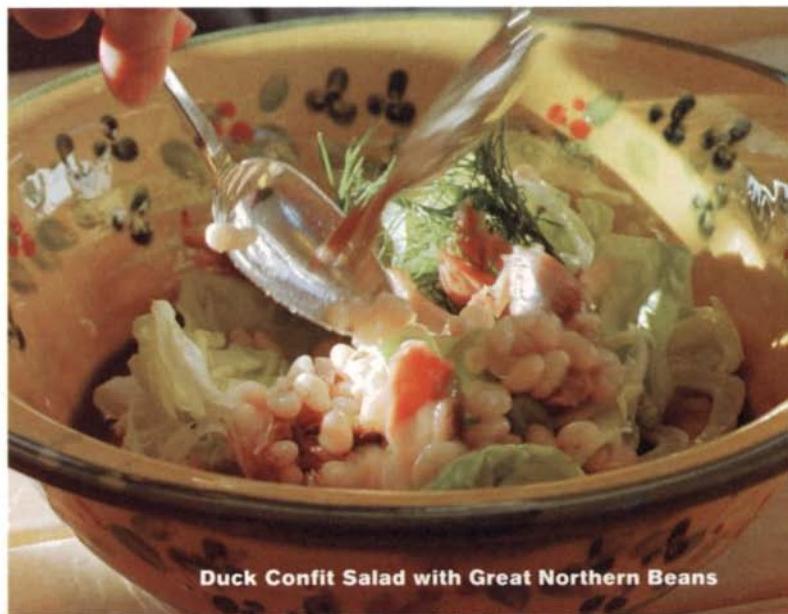


Duck Confit Risotto with Butter & Sage

simple, relatively quick, and minimally hands-on. But if you don't feel like going through the process, you can buy the duck confit from specialty stores or even by mail (see Sources, p. 98).

One duck offers loads of flavor

Traditionally, the whole duck is used for confit. Today, however, many chefs confit only the legs, ar-



Duck Confit Salad with Great Northern Beans

guing that the breasts get too dry when cooked this way. I like to get the most confit possible from the duck and happily use the breast meat. The texture is admittedly not as lush, but the flavor is just as wonderful. In a dish where the confit stands alone, I only use the more succulent leg meat. But when it's going into a creamy risotto, where the texture won't be noticed, then the breast meat works equally well.

If you confit the legs and breast, then all that should remain of the duck are the back,

wings, neck, and heart. I like to use these to make a duck stock by simmering the bones for a couple of hours with chunks of onion, carrot, celery, a bay leaf, and plenty of fresh thyme—the same technique you'd use for a basic chicken stock. The stock adds another level of flavor to the duck confit risotto and the duck and bean salad, if you choose to use dried beans rather than canned. *(Method and recipes follow)*

How to confit duck

To cook one duck, you need about 2½ cups of fat. A 4½-pound duck renders at least 1 cup of fat. Ask your butcher for extra duck fat or order by mail (see p. 98 for sources). Otherwise, you'll need another cooking fat to supplement. I'd use a mild lard; it's flavor isn't obtrusive. A 4½-lb. Long Island duck typically yields 2 cups (8 oz.) confit meat (about equal parts leg and breast meat).

1 duck, about 4½ lb. (see "Duck choices" at far right)
4 tsp. coarse salt
2 bay leaves, broken into pieces
5 sprigs fresh thyme
3 large cloves garlic, crushed and peeled
About 1½ cups lard or additional duck fat



1. Prepare the duck

Cut the legs from the duck and cut away each half breast.

Trim any excess skin and fat from the legs and save for rendering (see the photo above).

Gently but firmly pull the skin from the breast meat beginning at an edge (photo above right).

Set the skin aside and put the breasts and legs in a baking dish. Sprinkle liberally with the salt. Nestle the bay leaves, thyme, and garlic among the duck pieces (photo at right). Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 24 hours.



RECIPES

Crisp Duck Legs with Sautéed Potatoes

Traditionally, the duck legs are sautéed, but I think the skin gets more evenly crisped with my method. Serves two.

FOR THE POTATOES:

1 lb. baking potatoes (about 2 medium), peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes
½ cup duck fat (or 6 Tbs. vegetable or olive oil and 2 Tbs. unsalted butter)
1 clove garlic, finely minced
2 Tbs. finely minced fresh flat-leaf parsley
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE DUCK:

2 duck confit legs

To prepare the potatoes—Put the potatoes in a large pot of cold, salted water and bring to a boil over high heat. As soon as a full boil is reached, test for doneness—the potatoes should be tender when pierced with a knife tip. If necessary, continue cooking at a lively simmer over medium heat until done. Immediately drain the potatoes and spread them on paper towels to dry thoroughly.

To crisp the duck—Heat the oven to 450°F. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil. Gently wipe off any excess duck fat from the legs. Put the duck legs, skin side up, on the baking sheet. Roast on the top oven rack until the skin is a deep golden brown and very

crisp, 20 to 25 min. Check often near the end to prevent burning.

To crisp the potatoes—While the duck is in the oven, melt ¼ cup of the duck fat in a heavy 12-inch skillet (cast iron is best) over medium-high heat. When hot, add half of the potatoes and cook, tossing continuously, until deep golden and crisp, about 10 min. Use a slotted spoon to transfer them to paper towels to drain; keep warm. Repeat with the remaining fat and potatoes. When ready to serve, return all the potatoes to the pan, add the garlic and parsley, and sauté until the garlic is just barely golden, about 1 min. Immediately remove them from the heat and season with salt and pepper. Serve hot with the crisp duck legs and a simple salad.

Duck Confit Salad with Great Northern Beans

If you've got the time, use dried white beans cooked in duck stock instead of the canned beans. Serves four as a first course; two as a main course.

3 Tbs. olive oil
1 Tbs. red-wine vinegar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 cups canned Great Northern or navy beans, rinsed and drained well
1 cup bite-size pieces duck confit, preferably from the leg and thigh (skin removed)
4 cups mesclun or mixed greens



2. Render the fat

Trim all the skin and fat from the carcass (use the carcass for stock, if you like). Put the skin and fat, including the skin from the breasts and trimmings from the legs, in a small, heavy saucepan over low heat. Cook, partially covered, at a gentle simmer, stirring occasionally to prevent the skin from sticking (photo above).

After about 1½ hours, the skin will be deep golden in color and crisp, meaning it has rendered almost all of its fat. Take the pan off the heat and let it cool slightly. Strain the fat into a container, seal it, and refrigerate until ready to use. (The crisped skin may be eaten or discarded.)



3. Cook the duck

In a heavy, 1½-qt. saucepan, melt 2½ cups rendered duck fat (and lard, if needed; see note at far left) over low heat. Blot the duck pieces with paper towels to remove excess salt and to dry them. Put the duck in the pan, along with the garlic, thyme, and bay leaves. Arrange the pieces so that they're all submerged (photo above).

If needed, add more lard.

Cook, uncovered, at a very gentle simmer, between 185° and 195°F, for 2 hours. Don't stir, and never let it boil. After 2 hours, the duck confit will be very tender and will come easily off the bone. Lift the duck from the fat using tongs and either use immediately or cool and store, covered, in the refrigerator for up to a week.

1 small fennel bulb, trimmed, outer fibers peeled, bulb halved and sliced as thinly as possible

In a small bowl, whisk the oil into the vinegar; season with salt and pepper. Put the beans, duck, greens, and fennel in a large bowl and toss with the vinaigrette. Adjust the seasonings and serve.

Duck Confit Risotto with Butter & Sage

The confit practically melts into the rice during cooking, adding to the creaminess of this risotto. If you've made a stock from the duck bones, use it here for added flavor depth. Remember, confit is salty, so don't add any more salt until near the end. *Serves four as a first course; two as a main course.*

3 to 4 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth or homemade duck stock

1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

3 Tbs. unsalted butter

⅔ cup finely minced onion or shallot

1 cup raw Arborio or Carnaroli rice

1 cup (packed) bite-size pieces duck confit (from 1 leg and 1 breast, or 2 legs, or 2 breasts; skin removed)

6 large leaves fresh sage, cut into thin strips (about 1½ Tbs.)

1 cup dry white wine

⅔ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese; more to taste

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

In a small saucepan, bring the broth (or stock) to a boil. Reduce to a gentle simmer at medium-low heat.

In a medium-size, heavy saucepan, heat the olive oil and 2 Tbs. of the butter over medium-high heat. Once the butter melts, add the onion or shallot and cook, stirring constantly, until translucent and softened, 3 to 4 min. Add the rice, stirring constantly to coat well, and cook until the outside of the rice is translucent, about 2 min. Add ¾ cup of the duck confit and 2 tsp. of the sage; stir to combine. Immediately raise the heat to high, add the wine, and cook, stirring, until most of the liquid has disappeared, about 2 min. Add enough broth to just cover the rice, about 1 cup. As soon as it simmers (which should be almost immediately), reduce the heat to low or medium low to maintain a steady but gentle simmer. Stir frequently and continue to add broth, a scant ½ cup at a time, as it's absorbed by the rice.

After about 15 min., begin testing the rice for doneness. By this time, you should have added about 3 cups of the broth, and the rice should be creamy but slightly firm. Once the rice is tender to the bite with just a tiny white grain left in the center of the kernel, stir in the Parmesan and the remaining 1 Tbs. butter. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Stir constantly until the cheese and butter are fully incorporated. Cook for another 1 min., until the risotto is creamy but not runny. Remove from the heat. Serve immediately, garnished with the remaining confit and sage and more Parmesan.

Duck choices

When shopping for duck, you'll find that Long Island, also called Pekin, duck is the most readily available. Luckily, for making confit, this variety is quite fatty, though not as meaty as the harder-to-find Muscovy duck, which has a lower fat content. Another option for confit is the Moulard duck, which is the duck often used for foie gras in the U.S. For mail-order sources for fresh duck and duck fat, see p. 98.

Kate Nowell-Smith is a recipe tester and developer. She lives in Healdsburg, California. ♦

Crusty French Bread Rolls

These impressive rolls are easier to make than you think—and they can be made up to two weeks ahead

BY LAUREN GROVEMAN

As a cooking teacher, I get a lot of satisfaction out of demystifying those techniques and recipes that are shrouded in a veil of misunderstanding. My French bread rolls are a perfect example of something that even good cooks expect to get only from a restaurant kitchen or from a fine bakery. In reality, these rolls are not only easy to make at home, but they're also much richer in flavor and texture than many rolls bought from a bakery.

Most people think that making bread at home is too time-consuming or requires special equipment. The truth is that you need no special equipment (although a few easy-to-find pieces help), and it takes less than thirty minutes to make the dough. Shaping

the rolls is quick, too, especially once you get the hang of it. Even though the dough takes several hours to rise, your actual hands-on time is only about an hour, leaving you free to do other things. After the first full rise, the dough can be punched down, covered, and refrigerated for up to two days until you're ready to shape and bake the rolls. And if you don't need a dozen rolls all at once, you can still bake the full batch and either reheat the remaining rolls the next night or freeze them for up to two weeks.

Get started by gathering your equipment
You can get good results with the standard baking equipment you probably already have, but for the



Photos: Steve Hunter



most authentic look and feel to these rolls, you might consider buying a few new pieces of inexpensive equipment. The crispest crusts come from baking on either a large pizza stone or a set of quarry tiles (unglazed terra cotta clay squares; see Sources, p. 98). I prefer quarry tiles since their darker color retains more heat, which helps to produce rolls with a really deep brown color. If you have neither of these, you can still get good results with extra-dark, shallow baking sheets. A wooden or metal baker's peel is helpful for transferring the risen rolls to the hot tiles or stone, and a short-handled

broom makes it easy to sweep any leftover cornmeal off the tiles after baking.

Regardless of your baking surface, you'll need a selection of small tools; see the list on p. 70. You may also use a heavy-duty mixer fitted with a dough hook to do the initial mixing (see the sidebar on p. 71), although I prefer to mix by hand.

Fresh from the oven, French bread rolls are light and airy on the inside, crisp and crackly on the outside.

Want to see this in action?

Check out our video on shaping rolls on *Fine Cooking's* web site, www.finecooking.com

Go easy on the flour as you knead the dough

The trick to getting the lightest texture in the finished rolls is adding only as much flour to the dough as you need to bring it together and



Stir until stiff. When the dough gathers around the spoon and becomes difficult to stir, turn it out onto a floured work surface and begin kneading it.

Essential tools

Measuring cups

Measuring spoons

Mixing bowls

- two large
- one medium
- one small

Pastry brush

Wooden spoon

Rubber spatula

Bench knife

- (hand-held metal pastry scraper)
- or plastic bowl scraper

Dishtowels

- several clean,
- non-terry types

Two baking sheets or trays

- for rising the rolls

Kitchen parchment

- (if baking the rolls on baking sheets)

Sharp utility knife

Scissors

knead it. Depending on the relative humidity of your kitchen, the amount of flour you use might be different each time you make the rolls. That's why, instead of calling for an exact amount of flour in my recipe, I let the dough tell me when it's had enough. (It's also why the recipe doesn't call for weighing the flour.)

I start the dough by waking up the yeast in a little warm sugar water, and then I combine it with the other dough ingredients except the flour. Next, I gradually stir in the flour. As soon as the dough comes together in a shaggy mass that gathers around the mixing spoon and becomes hard to stir, I stop adding flour and turn the dough out onto my floured work surface. As I knead, I add only enough flour to keep the dough from sticking to my hands and the work surface. After a few minutes of brisk kneading, the dough is smooth and elastic. To check its elasticity, I either poke it with two fingers or give it a squeeze (see the photo at right). If it quickly springs back to its original shape, it's ready to rise.

Once the dough has gone through two rises and I've shaped it into either round or oval rolls (as shown on p. 72) or a few of both, flour becomes my friend again. Dousing the shaped rolls with a heavy coating of medium rye or white flour before they rise one last time results in a wonderfully earthy look. The flour toasts during baking and clings to the outside of the baked rolls, giving them an added dimension in flavor and an enticing appearance. I prefer rye flour because it has a nuttier flavor and is less easily absorbed than white flour, but you can use either.

Add steam during baking for a tender crumb

When steam is introduced to the dry oven environment, it moistens the exterior of the rolls and keeps the crusts soft enough to allow for even, rapid expansion during the initial stages of baking. This is crucial for a tender, well-formed crumb. Eventually



Push, fold, turn. Use brisk motions to knead the dough until it's smooth and elastic. If it sticks, use a bench knife or a bowl scraper to release it.



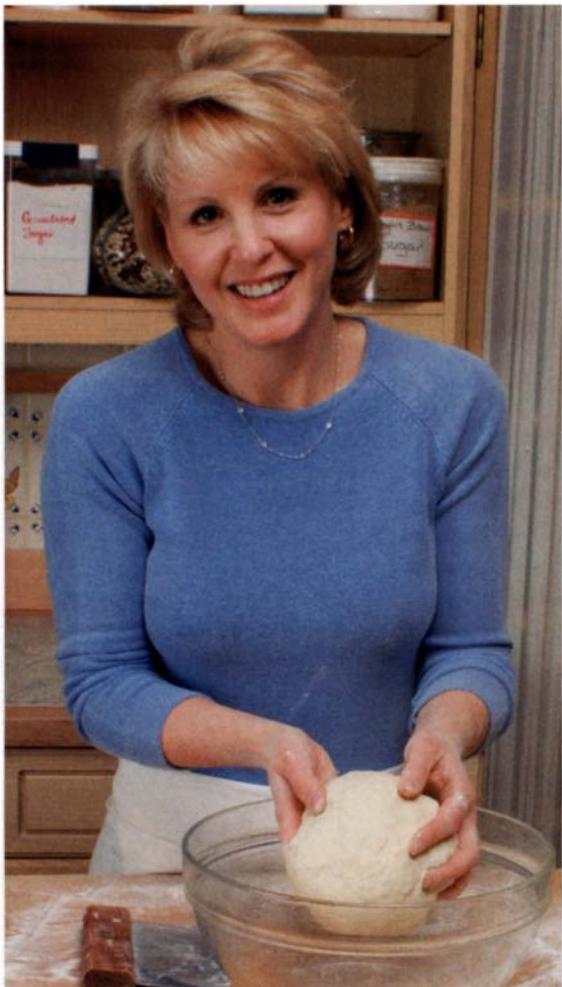
Look for that spring. You've kneaded enough when the dough springs back after being squeezed.

the steam evaporates, allowing the exterior to crisp. Professional bakers use special steam-injected ovens to get this effect, but I've found that I can approximate it in my home oven by using ice water.

Just after I put the rolls in the oven, I toss some ice water onto the oven floor and quickly shut the door before any steam escapes. If throwing water on your oven floor makes you nervous, you can use a metal baking pan to catch the ice water instead. If you have a gas oven, put the pan on the oven floor; if you have an electric oven with a heating coil on the floor, put the pan on the bottom rack.

One last trick—after the rolls have finished baking, I leave them in the turned-off oven for about five minutes. This step results in extra-crisp crusts because it continues the evaporation of moisture without overbrowning the crusts.

Once you've become familiar with making the basic rolls, you can create delicious variations by adding new flavors. For instance, when assembling the liquid mixture, add a handful of minced fresh chives to the dough or replace the plain water with



**"Listen to your dough," says Lauren Groveman.
"It will tell you what it needs if you pay attention to it."**

Mixing the dough by machine

I strongly recommend you mix the dough by hand because you'll get the best results if you stay in contact with the dough as it comes together. But if you must, you can use an electric mixer fitted with a dough hook. Put the liquid ingredients (including the dissolved yeast), sugar, dry milk, salt, and pepper (if using) in the bowl of your mixer. Add 3 cups flour and mix to combine well. Add more flour $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time (stop the machine each time you add flour) and continue mixing until dough leaves the sides of the bowl but isn't overly dry. Occasionally, stop and scrape the sides of the bowl.

an equal amount of the strained soaking liquid used to reconstitute a generous $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried porcini mushrooms. Or try adding $\frac{1}{2}$ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, some minced sun-dried tomatoes, some very thin ribbons of fresh basil leaves, and a few grinds of black pepper.

RECIPE

French Bread Rolls

You can make the dough up to two days (one day if you've added extra flavorings) before shaping and baking by punching it down after the first rise and storing it, well covered, in the refrigerator. Bring the dough close to room temperature before shaping, and let the shaped rolls rise longer until they're soft and very billowy. *Yields 12 rolls.*

**6 cups unbleached all-purpose flour; more as needed
2 Tbs. melted clarified butter (see Basics, p. 92),
store-bought ghee, or light olive oil; more for
greasing the rising bowl and plastic wrap
1 package (2 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp.) active-dry yeast
2 tsp. sugar, plus a pinch for the yeast
2 cups lukewarm water (about 70°F)
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) dry nonfat milk
Scant 1 Tbs. table salt
A few grinds of black pepper (optional)
About 1 cup medium rye flour (optional; use
all-purpose flour as a substitute) for dusting
Yellow cornmeal (preferably medium ground) for
the baker's peel or baking sheets
Coarse salt for sprinkling**

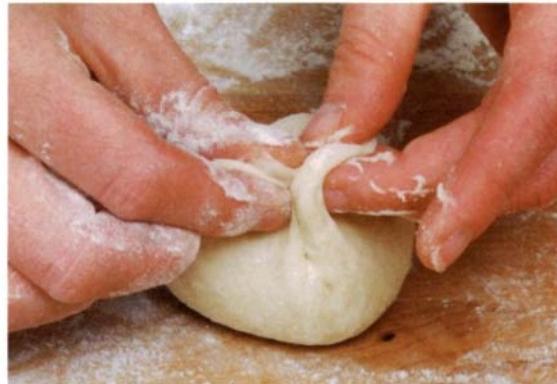
To make the dough—Sift the flour into a medium bowl; set aside. Brush some melted clarified butter on the interior of a large (5-qt.) bowl and one side of a piece of plastic wrap large enough to cover the bowl; set aside.

In a small bowl, stir the yeast and a pinch of sugar into $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the lukewarm water until dissolved. When the yeast is visibly active and bubbling, pour the remaining $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups lukewarm water into another large bowl. Add the 2 Tbs. clarified butter, the 2 tsp. sugar, the dry milk, salt, pepper (if using), and the dissolved yeast mixture. Add about 3 cups of the flour and stir with a wooden spoon until incorporated. Continue to add more flour (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time) and stir until the dough comes together in a mass that leaves the sides of the bowl and is no longer easy to stir; you may not need all the flour.

With a sturdy rubber spatula, scrape the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface. Flour your hands and knead the dough until it's perfectly smooth and elastic (as shown opposite), 3 to 5 min. If the dough sticks, use your bench knife or bowl scraper to release it. Add only as much additional flour as necessary to keep the dough from sticking to your hands and the work surface.

Put the dough in the greased bowl and brush the top of the dough with melted clarified butter. Cover with the greased plastic wrap and then with a clean dishtowel. Let the dough rise in a warm, draft-free spot until doubled in volume, about 2 hours. *(Continued)*

To shape and rise round rolls, pull and pinch



Set a piece of dough on a floured surface and begin to pull the sides up and pinch them on top to form a small knot in one spot. Continue this pulling and pinching, flouring your fingertips as necessary, until you've shaped a tight, round ball of dough with a slightly pinched area on top.



Lay the roll smooth side down (pinched side up) on the floured towel and gently roll it around so some of the flour coats the sides. Cover with a clean dish-towel. Repeat with the remaining pieces, covering each roll as you complete it. Let rise, covered, until the rolls look light and billowy, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

To shape and rise oval rolls, pinch even more



Begin to shape a piece of dough as for a round roll. Once you have formed a somewhat taut ball of dough, begin pulling the dough up from the sides to form a straight seam that will extend from one side to the other. The result is an oval shape, similar to an egg.



To give a finished look to the ends, pinch an end, pull it up, and tuck it onto the top of the roll. Pinch the new end into a point. Repeat with the other end. Let the shaped rolls rise, smooth side down (seam side up) on floured towels, as described above.

Uncover the bowl. Lightly flour the back of your hand and punch down the dough by giving it several swift swats. The dough will be quite sticky and spongy, so use your fingertips to help release it from the sides of the bowl, allowing it to deflate. At this point, you can either refrigerate the dough for later (see headnote) or continue the rise. To continue the rise, turn the dough over in the bowl, cover as before, and let rise again until doubled in volume and light in texture, about 2 hours.

To shape the rolls—Lay two clean, dry dishtowels over two baking sheets and dust them very heavily with a layer of the medium rye or all-purpose flour.

Deflate the dough by pulling it away from the sides of the bowl. Turn the dough out onto your floured work surface and gently knead the dough a few times

to finish deflating. Using the blade of your bench knife or bowl scraper, cut the dough in half. Cut each half in half again and then cut each piece into three equal pieces for a total of twelve. Cover the pieces with a clean dishtowel. Flour your hands and remove one piece of dough from under the towel, leaving the remaining pieces covered. Shape the rolls into either rounds or ovals as shown in the photos above.

To bake the rolls—While the rolls are rising, set up your oven (see the sidebar opposite) and heat it to 450°F. If baking on tiles or stone, sprinkle your peel with cornmeal. Otherwise, line two large, shallow baking sheets with parchment and sprinkle them with cornmeal. Put 4 ice cubes in a 1-cup measuring cup and add enough cold water to reach the 1/4-cup mark. Set the cup next to the oven.

Setting up your oven

The way you set up your oven depends on what you'll bake your rolls on and where you'll place your ice water pan. The top part of your oven can get too hot and brown the rolls too quickly, so you want to bake them as low in the oven as possible. Ideally, you'll have the ice water pan on the floor of the oven and your tiles or stone on a rack set in the lowest position. If you have an electric heating element on the bottom of your oven, set the ice water pan on the lowest rack and position the tiles or stone on a second rack just above the pan.

If using baking sheets, you'll likely need two racks for the sheets unless you have a very large oven. Position them as low as possible.

Begin heating the oven to 450°F at least thirty minutes before you bake the rolls. Your tiles or stone and the empty ice water pan should be in the oven as it heats; baking sheets should not.

Gently lift the risen rolls and invert them (smooth side up) onto the prepared peel or baking sheets, but don't remove any clinging flour from their surface. For oval rolls, use a sharp knife or a razor to make a slash from one end of the top to the other. For round rolls, use scissors to snip a crisscross (see the photos at right). Sprinkle the rolls with coarse salt.

If using tiles or a stone—Lift the loaded peel by the handle and give it a little shake to make sure that the rolls aren't sticking. Open the oven door and cover the window with a towel (to prevent contact with the ice water, which could break the window), put the peel all the way in the back of the oven over the tiles. With one swift jerk, remove the peel, leaving the rolls on the hot tiles. (It's okay if the rolls touch when they land.) Immediately toss the ice water into the hot metal pan, remove the towel, and quickly shut the door.

If using baking sheets—Put the baking sheets in the oven and toss the ice water into the pan as directed above. If you're using two racks, switch the positions of the sheets after the first 12 min. of baking.

Bake the rolls at 450°F until light golden brown, 20 to 25 min. Reduce the heat to 400°F and bake until deep golden brown, about 5 min. Turn the oven off and let the rolls remain in the oven with the door closed to finish crisping for another 5 min. Remove the rolls from the oven and let them cool on a wire rack for at least 20 min. Serve or store (see the sidebar at right).

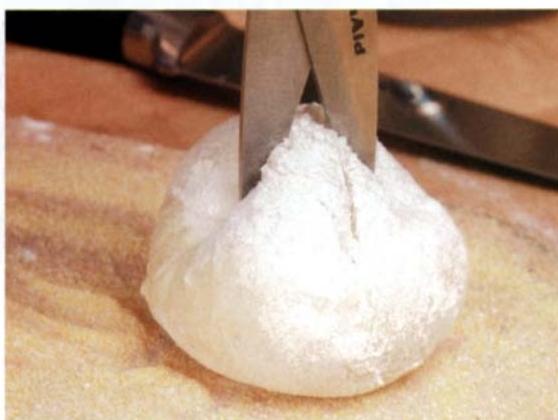
Lauren Groveman is a cooking teacher, a cookbook author, and the host of the public television series, Home Cooking with Lauren Groveman. ♦

Slash the rolls or...



Cut a fairly deep slash into each oval roll at a slight angle.

...snip a crisscross



Cut a crisscross about an inch deep into each round roll.



Toasted flour clinging to the rolls gives them a nutty flavor and a rustic look.

STORING FRENCH BREAD ROLLS

Nontraditional ingredients like dry milk and clarified butter give these rolls great keeping power. To serve on the day of baking, keep them at room temperature, either fully exposed or in a paper bag.

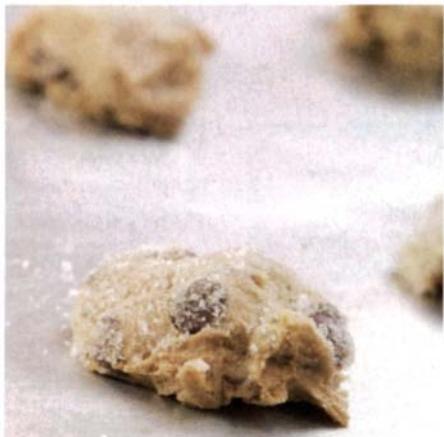
To serve the next day, seal the rolls in a plastic bag once they're completely cool and store at room temperature. Just before serving, put the rolls on a wire rack set on a shallow baking sheet and bake in a 400°F oven for five minutes. Turn off the oven and let rolls remain there until the crusts become crisp, about five minutes more.

For longer storage, freeze the rolls in doubled heavy-duty freezer bags, for up to two weeks. Remove them from the freezer several hours before serving, leaving them in the sealed bags at room temperature. To reheat, follow the instructions above.

Mocha Chocolate-Chip Cookies

An alluring trio of coffee, chocolate, and cinnamon gives these cookies sophisticated flavor

BY ANNIE GIAMMATTEI



Shape the dough into disks. Scoop up a tablespoon of cookie dough and flatten it slightly. Dip the top in sugar.



Let the cookies crisp up. Annie Giamattei leaves them on the baking sheet for a minute or two before moving them to racks lined with paper towels.

I've been making these delicious cookies for so long that friends and family no longer refer to them by the name I gave them—Mocha Chocolate Chips. They've become simply "Annie's cookies." Over the years, I have also brought these cookies to the *Fine Cooking* office—I'm the associate art director for the magazine—for various birthday celebrations, baby showers, and magazine milestone parties. In fact, I can detect a not-too-well hidden look of disappointment in my colleagues' eyes if I dare to bring in something different. "This cake is good," the look says, "but where are the cookies?"

Finally, one day the editors demanded that I share the recipe—and the secrets that make it so good—with our readers. I was happy to oblige.

Use an instant coffee you'd actually drink and a cinnamon with personality

My recipe evolved from a chocolate-chip cookie recipe passed along by a friend. What intrigued me was that the recipe

called for adding coffee and cinnamon, two flavors that I love, to the dough. The cookies I made from that recipe were fine but not as flavorful as I had hoped. So I reworked the recipe and wound up tripling the amounts of both the cinnamon and the coffee.

Because the coffee and cinnamon now have such a strong presence, I experimented with different brands and styles of both. Made with cinnamon from the supermarket, which is usually cassia cinnamon imported from Indonesia, the cookies are really good. But made with cinnamon bought from a spice retailer, they're even better. My favorite is the Chinese cassia cinnamon from Penzeys, which you can easily mail-order (see Sources, p. 98). Chinese cassia has more flavor than Indonesian. More potent still is Vietnamese cassia, which Penzeys has begun importing; if you want to experiment with Vietnamese cassia, start by using a little less than the recipe calls for and then adding more if you like an intense cinnamon flavor. Ceylon cinnamon, which is botanically different from cassia, has a more complex flavor, but its subtleties can get overshadowed by the other flavors in the cookie.

Perhaps even more important than the style or origin of the cinnamon is its freshness. Even supermarket cinnamon will taste better if it hasn't been sitting around for ages. (Stored airtight, cinnamon keeps its flavor for a year or two.)

To get the best coffee flavor, I switched from instant coffee granules to espresso powder. For one thing, the powder saves the step of crushing the granules. (If you do use granules, seal them in a plastic bag and roll a heavy rolling pin back and

Mocha Cinnamon Chocolate-Chip Cookies

No eggs in this cookie dough means you can take a taste with no worries, a dangerous thing if you want to actually bake the full amount of cookies. *Yields 48 cookies.*

9 oz. (2 cups) all-purpose flour
½ tsp. baking powder
¾ tsp. ground cinnamon
¼ tsp. salt
10 oz. (2½ sticks) unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
3 Tbs. instant espresso powder (or 4 Tbs. instant-coffee granules, crushed)
1 cup confectioners' sugar
½ cup packed light brown sugar
1½ cups semisweet chocolate chips
About ¼ cup granulated sugar for dipping

Heat the oven to 350°F. Line a cooling rack with paper towels.

In a medium bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt. In a larger bowl, beat the butter and coffee until well combined. Add the confectioners' sugar and brown sugar and beat until combined. Stir in the flour mixture about ½ cup at a time, mixing well after each addition. Stir in the chocolate chips.

Put the granulated sugar in a small, shallow bowl. Scoop out about 1 Tbs. dough and flatten it slightly into a disk. Dip one side into the granulated sugar and then set the disk, sugar side up, on an ungreased baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough, spacing the disks about 2 inches apart. Bake until the edges start to darken, 12 to 14 min. (Begin checking after 12 min., but don't be tempted to remove them too soon.)

Let the cookies cool for 1 to 2 min. on the baking sheets. Transfer them to the paper-towel-lined racks to cool completely. Bake the rest of the dough the same way.



forth over the bag to crush them.) A good-quality brand of instant espresso, like Medaglia D'Oro (which is available at many supermarkets; see Sources, p. 98), gives you a clean coffee flavor without the sour taste that some instant coffees can leave behind.

While using my favorite ingredients keeps the delicious flavor consistent, I do find that the height and texture of the cookies can vary slightly. I prefer the cookies on the flat side and crisp, and I've found a few ways to ensure this result. First, I start with very soft butter

(butter that barely holds its shape when poked with a finger). Next, I use a light hand when measuring the flour. My cup of flour weighs close to 4½ ounces, maybe a tiny bit less. If you don't have a scale, be sure not to pack the flour into the cup. Finally, I bake the cookies until the edges brown. The actual time may vary depending on your oven, but for crisp cookies, be sure at least that the edges have darkened. I let the cookies rest for a minute or two on the baking sheet before moving them to a cooling rack. This step lets the cookies set up a

little so that they don't fall apart, and it also helps guarantee crispness.

Wrap them tightly or freeze them

Once the cookies are cool, wrap them in plastic to keep them flavorful and crisp. They also freeze beautifully. Just don't think that keeping them in the freezer will prevent you from eating them. They may be out of sight, but I like them even better straight from the freezer.

Annie Giannattesi is the associate art director for Fine Cooking. ♦

- Frisée Salad with Roasted Beets & Orange Vinaigrette
- ◆
- Cassoulet
- ◆
- Winter Fruit Salad



Cassoulet

Cassoulet, the hearty peasant stew from the southwest of France, has long provoked hot debate. Which kind of beans should you use? Should you use duck or goose? If you add pork, is it truly cassoulet? And where does the original cassoulet really come from? Toulouse is supposed to be the capital of cassoulet...or is it Castelnau-dary, or Carcassone? There are numerous versions, each with its passionate partisans. But after thirty years of making cassoulet both in northern California and

in France, I've developed my own version. Rather than being a pure expression of one region's cassoulet, this one takes elements from them all while remaining a true cassoulet: It's a melding of great flavors that come from assembling duck confit, beans, lamb stew, sausage, and pork, and cooking them all together, slowly and gently.

Cassoulet (pronounced ka-soo-LAY) does take some advance planning, but there's no elaborate technique required. So, if you stick to a strategy and



Start with greens and end with fruit. A hearty cassoulet is almost a meal in itself, so keep the starter and dessert light and refreshing.

To build a great winter menu around this rich, rustic French stew, start and finish with refreshing salads

BY JEAN-PIERRE MOULLÉ

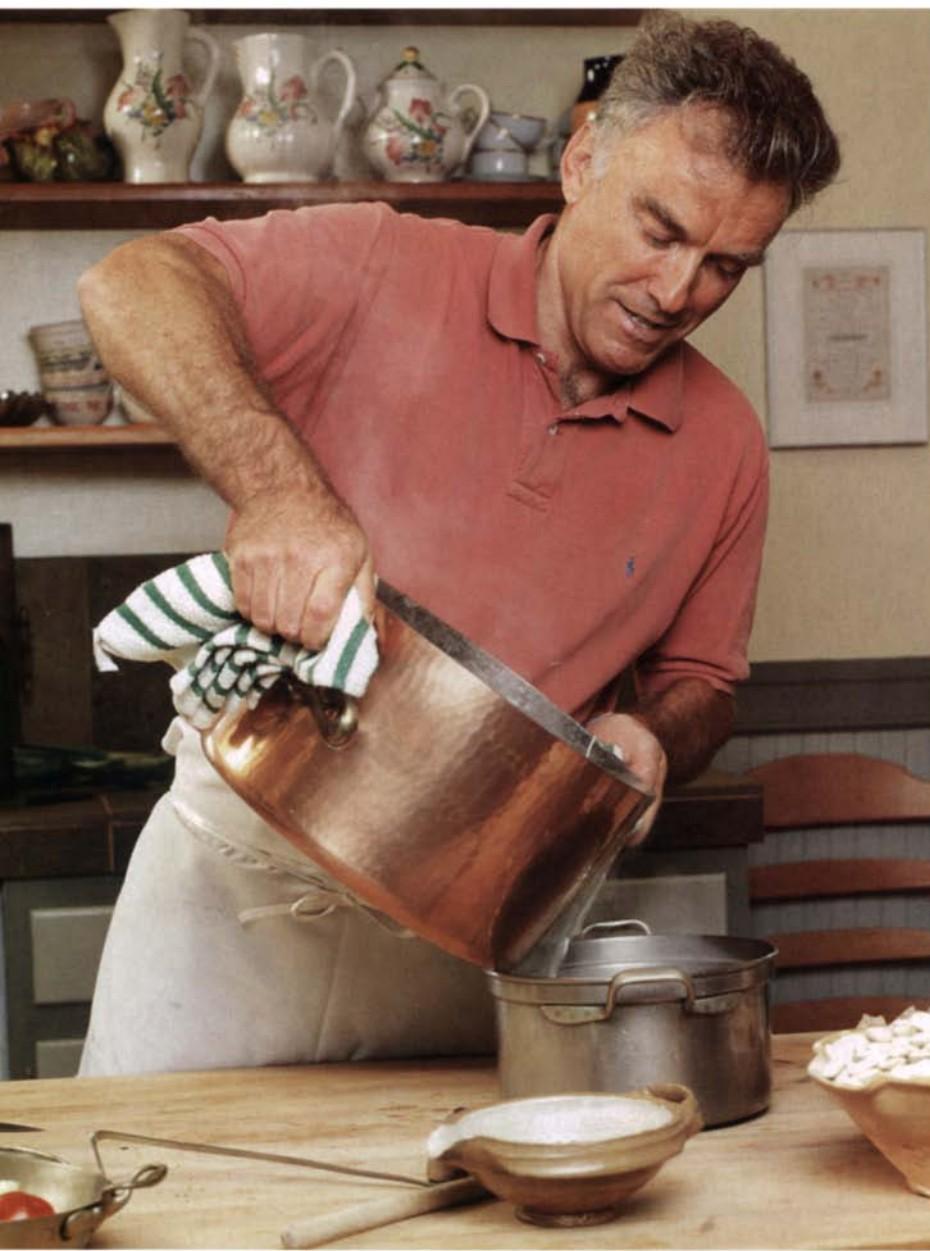
use the timetable on p. 79, it's really easy. And great cassoulet is worth the wait (the buildup is part of the experience), so it's the perfect thing for a special dinner party on a cold night—New Year's Eve, perhaps?

Cook cassoulet in earthenware or enameled cast iron

Traditionally, cassoulet is cooked in an earthenware casserole (the preparation gets its name from a particular casserole dish called a *cassole d'Ussel*). While

I love the deep flavor unique to cooking in earthenware, enameled cast iron gives good results, too, as will a ceramic soufflé-type dish. The main idea is to use a wide, fairly shallow vessel so there's enough crusty topping for everybody.

The most important thing about a good cassoulet is that the ingredients balance and marry well, so each brings something to the dish without losing its own character. Here are a couple of crucial details to ensure the best cassoulet:



For the best texture and flavor, Jean-Pierre Mouillé transfers the beans to another container to cool, keeping them in their cooking liquid.

♦ **Duck confit and duck fat.** Duck or goose is the only item that everyone agrees absolutely belongs in cassoulet, and the method for making duck confit on p. 64 will give rich, tender results. I love duck confit and always have some in my fridge, the way other people keep pickles or salsa. But good-quality duck confit is also available in specialty stores or by mail-order (see p. 98).

♦ **Dried white beans.** I like cannellini or Great Northern. Favas are too heavy, and flageolets are too delicate. Fresh shell beans sound like a good idea, but I've found that they have too much moisture to absorb the juices of the cassoulet.

♦ **Pig's foot, pork belly or pancetta, and pork rind.** These all add flavor, and a pig's foot will add body to the stew. You can order one at the butcher's, but if you just can't find one, use a fresh ham hock. Avoid



A lamb stew adds depth and balance to the finished cassoulet.

smoked meats if you can, as they're too strongly flavored for cassoulet.

♦ **Lamb stew.** Purists would argue that, technically, lamb doesn't belong in cassoulet, but I love the way it balances the duck and the pork.

♦ **Garlic sausage.** Or, use the plainest sausage you can find. I've found that the fennel flavor in Italian sausage overpowers the other flavors in a cassoulet.

♦ **Plain, coarse breadcrumbs.** A stale baguette is best. Stay away from sourdough and whole wheat, which have too strong a flavor. Again, some purists might scoff, but I find that breadcrumbs help bind a cassoulet, and I love the crusty texture they add. (For how to make fresh breadcrumbs, see Basics, p. 92.)

Cassoulet smells heavenly as it cooks, and it will be tempting to dig right in after you pull it out of the oven. But if you let it sit for at least half an hour (or cook it a day ahead and reheat it slowly in the oven), the meats can rest, the juices can thicken, and the whole thing will taste much better.

Because cassoulet is practically a meal in itself, I like to keep the menu simple. The beet and frisée salad and winter fruit salad are delicious and refreshing "bookends." So, invite a bunch of friends—especially the ones who love to sit around the table for hours—to savor this rich, irresistible stew.

For how to order special tools and ingredients, see Sources on p. 98.

Cassoulet

This recipe serves six generously, and it's easily doubled if you want to make more (plus, leftovers are delicious). If you don't have the traditional deep earthenware casserole, use a 5-quart enameled cast-iron Dutch oven or a ceramic soufflé dish—the vessel needs to be wide enough for a crust to form. For pork rind, order it or buy salt pork and cut the rind off, freezing the salt pork for another use. Serves six.

FOR THE BEAN STEW:

1 lb. dry white beans, such as cannellini or Great Northern
1 pig's foot or 1 small fresh ham hock
¾ lb. pork belly or pancetta
½ lb. pork rind
1 medium carrot, halved
½ large onion, peeled and halved, each half studded with 1 whole clove
½ tomato, peeled and seeded, or ½ cup canned whole tomatoes, drained
½ rib celery, halved
½ head garlic, halved across the top
1 bay leaf, several sprigs of fresh thyme, and several parsley stems, tied together in a bouquet
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE LAMB STEW:

1 lb. boneless lamb shoulder, neck, or shank meat (about 2 lb. on the bone)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup duck fat (see p. 98 for sources) or olive oil
1 medium carrot, peeled and coarsely chopped
1 onion, peeled and coarsely chopped
¾ cup dry white wine

2 tomatoes, peeled and seeded, or 2 cups canned whole tomatoes, lightly squeezed
1 bay leaf, several sprigs of fresh thyme, and several parsley stems, tied together in a bouquet
2 cloves garlic
2 cups homemade or low-salt chicken broth or duck stock
FOR THE CASSOULET:
¼ cup duck fat (see p. 98) or olive oil
½ lb. garlic sausage or sweet Italian sausage that's not seasoned with fennel
3 to 4 duck confit legs (see p. 64 to make or p. 98 for sources to try)
1 clove garlic
Bean stew (see the recipe above)
Lamb stew (see the recipe above)
2 cups coarse, unseasoned breadcrumbs, toasted, preferably from a baguette
Extra chicken broth or duck stock for moistening the cassoulet during baking, if needed

Make the bean stew—Soak the beans overnight in enough cold water to cover them well. Drain, rinse, and pick through them for stones and damaged beans. In a large saucepan, cover the pig's foot or ham hock, pork belly or pancetta, and pork rind with cold water. Bring to a boil, simmer for 3 min., drain, and rinse in cold water. Reserve. In a large saucepan, cover the beans with lukewarm water. Bring to a boil, drain, and return to the pan. Cover with hot water. Add the carrots, onion, tomato, celery, garlic, and herb bouquet. Bring to a boil, add the reserved pig's foot or ham hock, pork belly or pancetta, and pork rind. Simmer, covered, for 1½ hours,

CASSOULET TIMETABLE**One week ahead**

Make the duck confit (see p. 64) or mail-order it (see p. 98). Order the pig's foot (if using). Order the pork rind. Order the lamb shoulder.

Two days ahead

Soak the beans.

One day ahead

Make the bean stew.
Make the lamb stew.

That morning

Assemble and bake the cassoulet.

until completely tender (don't add salt yet). Transfer to a large pan to cool and reserve the beans in their cooking liquid. Remove the carrot, onion, and herb bouquet; discard. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed, but be prudent, as the pork parts add a good bit of salty flavor.

Meanwhile, make the lamb stew—Cut the lamb into 2½-inch pieces. Season with salt and pepper. In a large, heavy sauté pan over medium-high heat, melt the duck fat or heat the oil. Sear the lamb pieces until well browned on all sides. Remove with a slotted spoon and reserve. Add the carrot and onion, lower the heat

For easy assembly, get your elements ready ahead

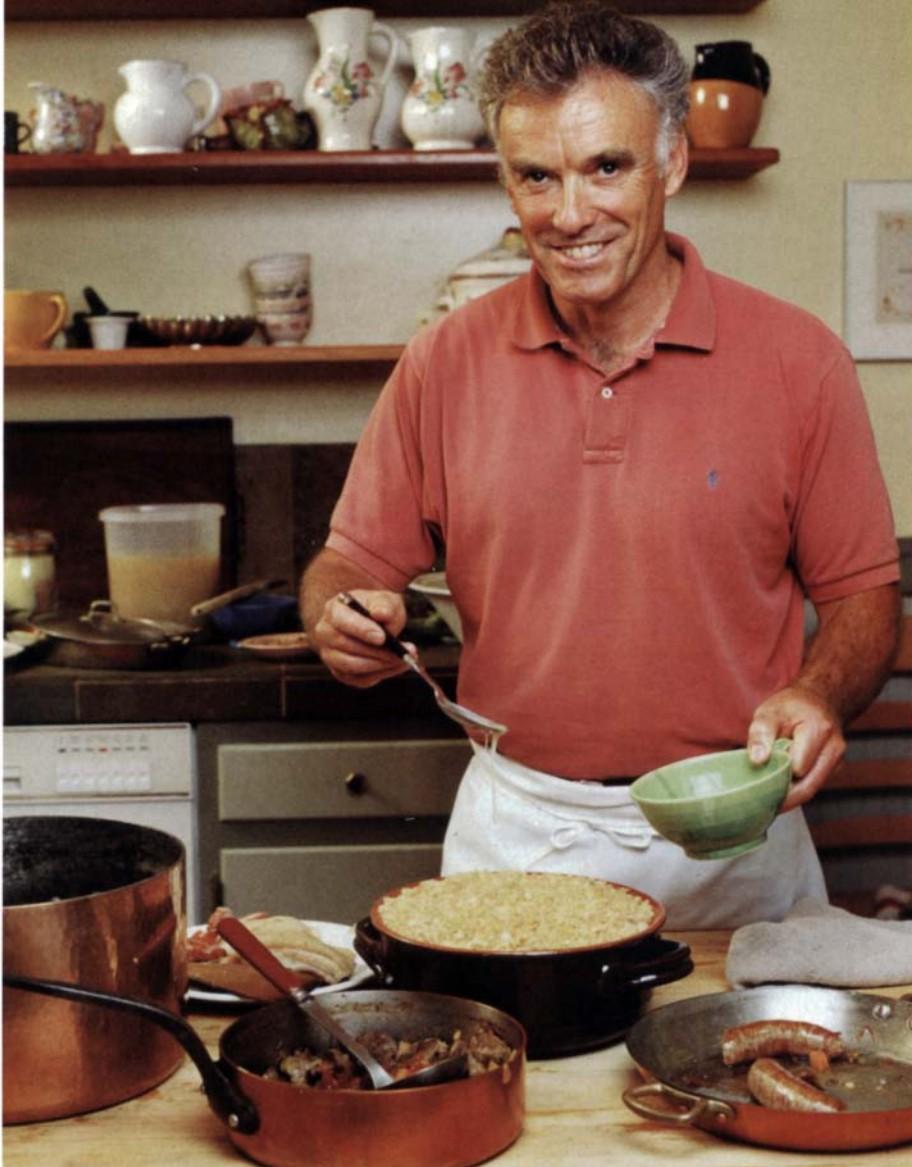
Beans need soaking and simmering, so give yourself two days. You can make the lamb stew at the same time, since many of the ingredients are the same.



Duck confit is a two-step dish as well. You can make it up to one week ahead, or just buy some already made.



Fresh sausages need browning before they're added to the cassoulet. A French garlic sausage is traditional, but sweet Italian works well, too.



"Cassoulet isn't exactly a dish you throw together quickly," admits Jean-Pierre Mouillé, but with the components made ahead, the final layering comes together easily.



wine choices

Try a hefty red with dark fruit and spice flavors

For the salad, choose a crisp Sauvignon Blanc, whose bright grapefruit and green-herb notes would be great with the zesty flavors of orange and sherry vinaigrette. Try a simple Entre-deux-Mers like Château Bonnet (\$9, and made by Jean-Pierre's in-laws), a Sancerre from Rossignol (\$16), or Geyser Peak Sauvignon Blanc from Sonoma (\$9). To match the cassoulet's intensity, go for a hearty red with plenty of personality, dark fruit flavors, and earthy, spicy notes. The 1999 Le Mistral from Joseph Phelps (\$27), a Châteauneuf-du-Pape style blend, would be perfect. Or try a Côtes-du-Rhône Villages (I like Domaine de l'Oratoire St. Martin, \$12). For a splurge,

try Châteauneuf-du-Pape from Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe, a lush Grenache blend from the Southern Rhône (\$38; the 1999 vintage drinks well at this early stage if you decant it). When it comes to dessert, the wine always needs to be as sweet as or sweeter than what's on the plate. Jean-Pierre has wisely chosen a light finish to this meal, so I'd follow his lead with something light in the glass. Pick a wine with crisp acidity, medium sweetness, light body, and little or no oak, like Rivetti "La Spinetta" Moscati d'Asti, a fragrant sparkler from Italy (\$16).

Tim Gaiser is a master sommelier and a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.

to medium, and cover the pan. Sweat the vegetables until tender but not browned, about 6 min. Raise the heat, add the white wine, and boil, scraping up any browned bits with a wooden spoon, until the liquid is reduced by half. Add the reserved lamb and any juices, the tomatoes, herb bouquet, garlic, and broth or stock. Bring to a boil and then reduce the heat and simmer, covered, until the lamb is tender, about 1 hour, skimming off the fat and froth as needed. Discard the herb bouquet and reserve the lamb stew until it's time to assemble the cassoulet.

To assemble the cassoulet—Heat the oven to 250°F. In a medium-size sauté pan over medium-high heat, heat half of the duck fat or olive oil. Add the sausage; brown it on all sides. When cool enough to handle, cut it into six pieces.

Cut the duck confit legs in half at the joint. Rub the garlic clove over the inside of an earthenware casserole, an enameled cast-iron Dutch oven, or a large ceramic soufflé mold. Retrieve the pig's foot or ham hock, pork rind, and pork belly or pancetta from the bean stew. Discard the pig's foot or ham hock bones. (If you've used a ham hock, tear off any remaining meat and add it to the bean stew). Cut the pork belly or pancetta into ½-inch pieces and reserve. Cut the pork rind into ½-inch pieces and scatter them over the bottom of the dish.

With a slotted spoon, transfer one-third of the beans to the dish. Do the same with half the pork belly or pancetta, all of the duck confit, half the lamb stew (again, use a slotted spoon, because you'll be using the cooking liquid later), and all of the sausage. Cover the meats with another one-third of beans, the remaining pork belly and lamb stew, and finish with the last one-third of beans. Combine the bean juices with the lamb sauce, taste for seasoning (remembering that the duck confit is salty), and pour just enough over the dish to barely cover the beans.

Sprinkle the dish with the bread crumbs and drizzle the remaining duck fat (melt it first if it's still solid) or olive oil over the breadcrumbs. Bake for 2½ hours and then raise the heat to 350°F and bake until the crust is a rich golden brown and the cassoulet is bubbling around the edges, about another 30 min. Check the cassoulet during baking—if it's getting too dry, add more broth or stock; if the crust is browning too quickly, cover it with foil. Let the cassoulet rest for at least 30 min. before serving. Bring the entire dish to the table and serve each guest some crust, beans, and pieces of the different meats.

START AND END THE MEAL WITH VIBRANT FLAVORS AND JUICY TEXTURES

**Frisée Salad with Roasted Beets & Orange Vinaigrette**

You may see frisée labeled as curly endive at the market. Mâche (also called lamb's lettuce) is a delicious alternative, and it's becoming much easier to find. Serves six to eight.

4 medium-size red or golden beets, tops sliced off, rinsed

2 shallots, minced

2 Tbs. sherry vinegar

Juice and grated zest of 1 orange

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

10 oz. frisée (tough, bright-green outer leaves discarded), washed, dried, and torn

2½ oz. (½ cup) walnuts, toasted and lightly chopped

Heat the oven to 400°F. Put the beets in a small baking dish with 1 cup water.

Cover with foil and roast until the beets are tender, 40 to 60 min. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine the minced shallot, vinegar, orange juice, and orange zest. Whisk in the olive oil in a thin stream; season with salt and pepper. When the beets are cool, peel them and cut into ½-inch dice. Toss with 1 to 2 Tbs. of the vinaigrette. Toss the frisée with some of the remaining vinaigrette (there may be a little vinaigrette left over). Divide the frisée evenly among salad plates, sprinkle with the beets and toasted walnuts, and serve.

**Winter Fruit Salad**

If you don't have sparkling wine on hand, a crisp Chardonnay (not an oaky one) works well, too. Yields 8 cups; serves six to eight.

2 navel oranges

1 blood orange

1 red grapefruit

2 tangerines

1 small pineapple, or ½ large pineapple

¼ cup packed light brown sugar

½ cup sparkling wine

1 Tbs. rum

1 banana

1 apple, such as Braeburn, Fuji, or Gravenstein

1 ripe pear

Prepare the navel oranges, blood orange, grapefruit, and tangerines following the method in the photos below (you can also watch a video at www.finecooking.com). Put all the citrus sections in a bowl; squeeze in the juices from the leftover membranes. Cover and chill.

Slice the top and bottom from the pineapple and rest the fruit on one of its flat cut surfaces. Cut off the pineapple skin, using the tip of a vegetable peeler to remove the eyes. Quarter it lengthwise, slice the core from each quarter, and cut each quarter into ½-inch pieces. Cover and chill.

A half hour before serving, combine the brown sugar, sparkling wine, and rum in a large bowl. Add the citrus and pineapple. Peel and slice the banana into ½-inch pieces; add it to the salad. Prepare the apple and the pear as follows: peel, quarter, core, and slice each quarter into four pieces, and add to the salad. Toss gently to combine thoroughly. Let sit covered at room temperature for about 30 min. Serve in small bowls with cookies on the side.

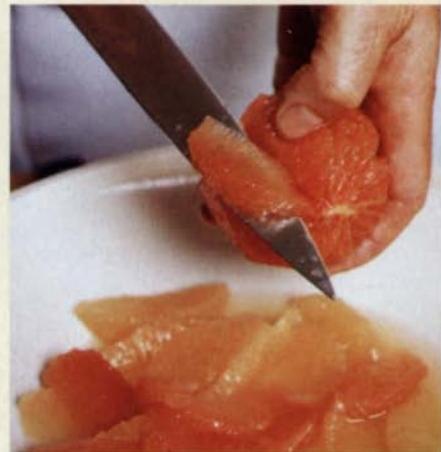
Jean-Pierre Mouillé is the former executive chef at Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, where he worked for almost twenty years. ♦

A neat and efficient way to segment citrus

Slice off the ends of the citrus to give you a stable base. Set the fruit on one end.



Slice off the peel, following the fruit's contours. Be sure to remove the white pith.



Slice along the membranes to free the sections; try to keep the sections intact.

Worth the Splurge

This sleek, lightweight **electronic scale** made by Salter will weigh up to 11 pounds of ingredients in precise $\frac{1}{8}$ -ounce increments. It converts to metric, and the 7x7-inch glass platform cleans off easily. \$40.

BY SARAH JAY



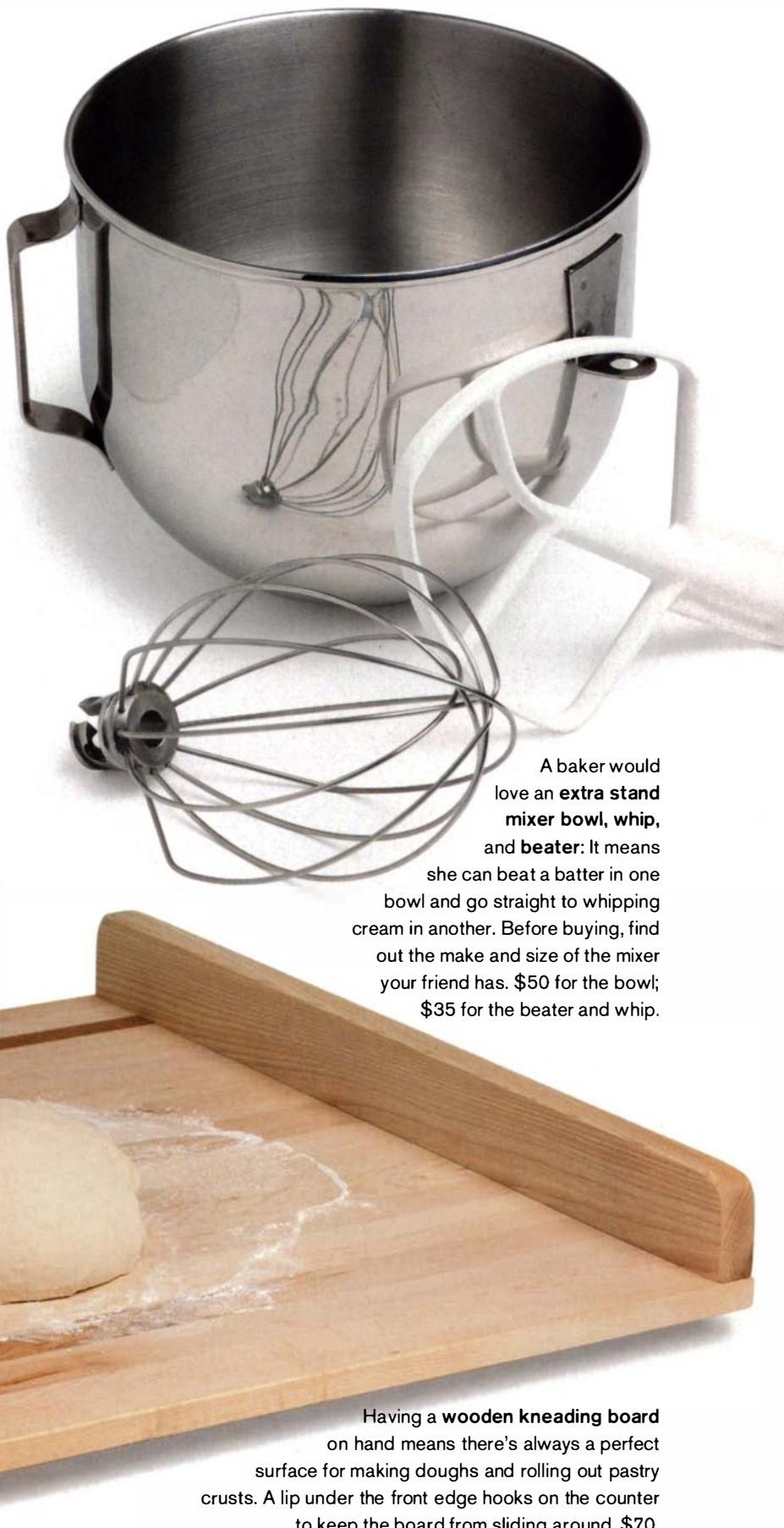
The hollow-ground edge on this 6½-inch **Japanese-style santuko knife** by Wusthof prevents vegetables from sticking to the blade by allowing air pockets to form, making it the ideal tool for cutting, dicing, or thinly slicing any vegetable, especially potatoes. \$105.

The best features of this 5½-quart **copper casserole** by Bourgeat—besides its warm, inviting luster—are its fast, even heat conductivity and its stainless-steel interior that never needs relining. For stewing or braising, it has no peer. \$400.

Most avid cooks have a wish list of things they would love to add to their kitchen. I've been toting my own list around for years now, buying items and crossing them off my list at an almost painfully slow rate. Why does it take such effort to buy something as useful as a kitchen scale or as affordable as a few heat-resistant spatulas? I think it's just that they feel superfluous. Sure, they'll help my cooking, but I don't truly *need* them. I just want them because they make cooking easier or more creative or maybe just more fun.

Well, that's exactly what makes them wonderful gifts. I know that, to some people, an extra stand mixer bowl isn't the sexiest present you could give, but for the passionate cook, stainless steel can be as sexy as platinum. A great kitchen tool lets a cook be more creative, and that's the best gift anyone could give.

Here you'll find a range of gift ideas that come from the *Fine Cooking* staff's own wish lists. Some are tools we already own that we would happily buy again, and some are things we're still pining for. Retail prices are approximate. For where to buy them, see Sources, p. 98.



A baker would love an **extra stand mixer bowl, whip, and beater:** It means she can beat a batter in one bowl and go straight to whipping cream in another. Before buying, find out the make and size of the mixer your friend has. \$50 for the bowl; \$35 for the beater and whip.

Having a wooden kneading board on hand means there's always a perfect surface for making doughs and rolling out pastry crusts. A lip under the front edge hooks on the counter to keep the board from sliding around. \$70.



An extra freezer

Anyone who likes to buy meat in bulk, freeze summer produce, or make quadruple batches of cookies and breads might be delighted with an extra freezer. (Some models are surprisingly affordable—cheaper than the copper casserole!) Before you shop, be sure that the recipient has the space for one. Also consider energy efficiency (uprights are less efficient than chest freezers), defrosting options (automatic is more convenient, but manuals minimize freezer burn), and capacity.

Must you have a gorgeous **wooden salad bowl**? Of course not, but it sets off salad greens so beautifully, it makes tossing so easy, and it ages so gracefully. This 12-inch cherry bowl would suit a small family.

\$72 for the bowl, \$22 for the serving utensils.



A 9½-quart Le Creuset **enameled cast-iron French oven** holds a steady heat and distributes heat evenly, so meats sear nicely and stews simmer gently. Plus, the pot, available in many colors, makes a fashion statement on the shelf, on the stove, or at the table. \$245.



This oversize **convection toaster oven** by DeLonghi is spacious enough to roast a small chicken or to fit a small gratin dish, and the fan-circulated hot air helps cookies bake more evenly. It also does the basics, like making toast. \$190.

This Italian stone mortar with wooden pestle won't budge when you grind spices, pound herb pastes, and make dressings or sauces. Cut from Carrera marble, it has a generous 2-cup capacity. \$60.

Stocking stuffers that feel luxurious

A gift doesn't have to be expensive to feel like a luxury. These tools are practical and inexpensive, yet they're also things that many kitchens are without. An instant-read digital thermometer (\$14), for example, lets you check the doneness of meats and poultry in seconds, without cutting into them and losing all the juices. Other efficient little items are sets of **odd-size measuring spoons and cups** (\$9 for spoons; \$20 for cups). The spoons are 2 teaspoons and 1½ and 2 tablespoons; the cups are ⅔, ¾, and 1½ cups. Polder makes a **digital cooking timer** (\$20) with a few neat features,

including a real-time clock and a temperature probe with high and low temperature alerts. A good-quality set of **French pastry brushes** (\$16) would be a welcome replacement for all those greasy, frayed brushes that have taken a few too many dips in the barbecue sauce. Or you might give someone a cheery assortment of **heat-resistant spatulas** (\$4 to \$10 each). Like pastry brushes, worn-out spatulas have a tendency to overstay their time in the kitchen.

Sarah Jay is the managing editor for Fine Cooking. ♦



Stack a Soufflé Cake for a Luscious



Holiday Dessert

Flourless chocolate soufflé cake gets layered with raspberries and cream for an easy yet impressive do-ahead dessert

BY RANDALL PRICE

Holiday season finds me evaluating all the new recipe ideas I've collected through the year. Some recipes, like a certain Brussels sprouts and blue cheese flan, are doomed to oblivion without my even trying them, while others, like my home-oven adaptation for the usually spit-cooked German baumkuchen, are one-shot wonders destined for my Kitchen Kuroiosities file. When it's time to actually decide on holiday menus, both for myself and for my catering clients, I'm often most satisfied when I fall back on some version of an old favorite, especially when I'm able to update it with an exciting new twist.

A chocolate soufflé roll cake has been in my holiday "top ten" repertoire for many years; it was inspired by a childhood memory of a dessert served at a Viennese restaurant in Cincinnati. I've kept this cake in my repertoire for so long because it's delicious, and also because it's relatively easy and fun to make. It's the dessert I most often call on for a last-minute showstopper. I've made so many that I can make it in my sleep—and I probably have, given the crazy schedule I keep around the holidays. So this year, I experimented with my reliable roll and came up with something even easier, but actually more impressive: four layers of the tender soufflé cake, filled with a mascarpone whipped cream, studded with raspberries, and



drizzled with dark chocolate glaze. It's got the drama of a napoleon with the lightness of a soufflé.

Light texture, deep flavor

The cake itself is a simple flourless soufflé: Melted chocolate is added to beaten egg yolks and sugar, stiff egg whites are folded in, and then the batter is baked in a lined jellyroll pan. The soufflé puffs but falls as it cools, so that it can be cut into panels that are delicate, but flexible enough to make assembly easy.

The recipe for the cake is the culmination of years of experimentation with the celebrated Soufflé Roll Leontine from Dionne Lucas. My interpretation delivers the full force of chocolate while adding subtle nuances from whiskey and coffee, a shockingly good complement. You can also just use coffee or even water if you want to avoid alcohol. The quality of the chocolate counts here, so use the best chocolate you can get.

Get organized before you start making the cake; you'll need to move fairly quickly once you begin.

**On your mark,
get set, whip.**

**You'll need to
move quickly
when whipping
your whites and
yolks, so get
your equipment
organized first.**

Temper and fold for a smooth, light batter



Temper, temper. Adding some whites to the chocolate mixture “tempers” it.



Mix and match. The tempered mixture is looser now, more like the consistency of the whipped whites.



Easy fold. The two mixtures will blend better now as they’re folded together with a large spatula.

Prepare the pan and get the oven heating. You need two mixing bowls, one for the yolks and one for the whites, but I streamline the beating by doing the egg whites first so that you don’t need to wash the beaters in between. The beaten egg whites will hold a few minutes as you beat the yolks, and you’ll just need to whisk them up again with a hand whisk before folding them into the batter. The only really tricky part of the recipe is the whites—they must hold very firm peaks but still be smooth, not grainy. If you sense that your whites are “curdling” from overbeating, throw them out and start again.

Soft filling, smooth slicing

Since there’s no flour in the cake, it’s amazingly tender and luscious, and your filling must be tender enough to make slicing easy yet firm enough to hold up the layers. The mascarpone added to the whipped cream gives some structure, as well as a more complex flavor, and the raspberries relieve the richness of the dessert (plus they look great). You can usually find fresh raspberries around holiday time—granted they’ve probably been shipped from the southern hemisphere—but you can use frozen berries in a pinch. Arrange them on the cake while they’re still frozen, but leave the cake at room temperature long enough before serving to let them thaw. They may weep a little juice, so they won’t look as perfect as fresh, but the taste will be fine.

I hope that many of you will incorporate this recipe into your own repertoire of favorites, and as you make it in the future you might want to try other fillings. Plain whipped cream is delicious, and I’ve also used classic buttercream fillings, but the cake must come to room temperature before serving or the contrast between the textures of cake and filling are too drastic. A whipped chocolate ganache also works well, and I’ve even spread the cake with softened ice cream for a Baked Alaska.

The drizzle of rich chocolate glaze is an elegant finish. Sometimes I add flecks of real gold leaf, which you can buy at an artists’ supply store.

Do-ahead timing, easier entertaining

None of the components of this cake takes long to make (despite the fact that the cake recipe looks long), but you can do each step at a different time.

- ◆ The glaze can be made up to four days ahead.
- ◆ The cake can be made up to one day ahead. Refrigerate it with a sheet of plastic stretched taut across the top of the pan so it doesn’t touch the cake surface. (It’s okay if it touches the cake a bit, though you may pull off a bit of the cake’s “skin” when you remove the plastic.)
- ◆ The mascarpone filling can be made up to an hour before assembly.
- ◆ The whole cake can be assembled the morning of the day you want to serve it, but don’t decorate

Spread the soufflé batter thin



Lots of volume. The batter is pourable but still thick and fluffy from all the air in the whites and yolks.



Fill it to the rim. The batter will puff during baking, but won't really flow over, so fill the pan and spread the batter evenly.



No bubbles, thanks. Randall Price lets the pan fall a short distance to "thwack" out any large air pockets.

the top with confectioners' sugar and glaze until up to two hours before serving. Keep the fully decorated cake in the fridge, uncovered, until about fifteen minutes before serving (the few minutes at room temperature will take the chill off the cake). A thin-bladed knife is best for cutting neat slices.

RECIPES

Chocolate Soufflé Layer Cake

Be sure to line the pan so that the cake will come out easily. Parchment is often sold in the baking section of the supermarket, or see Sources, p. 98. *Yields one 11x16-inch thin sheet cake, enough for four layers; the assembled cake serves eight to ten.*

1 oz. (2 Tbs.) unsalted butter
8 oz. good-quality bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped
1/4 cup strong coffee or whiskey, or a mix
7 large eggs
1 cup granulated sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
Confectioners' sugar for dusting

Make the chocolate glaze, following the recipe on p. 90.

Heat the oven (not a convection oven) to 375°F. Grease a jellyroll pan or half sheet pan (about 11x16 inches) and line the bottom and long sides with parchment. Grease the parchment or spray it with baking spray.

To make the batter—In a small heavy-based saucepan (or a double boiler), melt the butter, chocolate, and coffee or whiskey over very low heat, stirring with a whisk occasionally. Take care not to let the chocolate scorch and heat only until the chocolate has melted. Remove from the heat, whisk until the mixture is smooth and glossy, and set aside to cool slightly while you beat the eggs.

Separate the egg yolks and whites into two large clean mixing bowls. Using an electric mixer (either a hand or a stand mixer) on medium high, beat the egg whites first until soft peaks form. Add about 2 Tbs. of the sugar and beat on high speed for about 30 seconds. Set aside.

Without cleaning the beaters or whip, beat the egg yolks on medium high, with the salt and the remaining sugar, until the mixture becomes light and thick and forms a ribbon trail when the beaters are lifted, about 3 min. with a hand mixer, slightly less with a stand mixer. Turn the mixer to low speed, add the chocolate, and mix until completely blended, scraping down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula as needed.

With a clean whisk, vigorously beat the whites until a definite peak forms, about another 30 seconds.

Transfer about one-third of the whites into the bowl with the chocolate and fold them in with a rubber spatula. The whites should be smooth and blend into the chocolate thoroughly. Now scrape all of the chocolate mixture at once into the bowl with the remaining whites. Fold together lightly to blend, but don't overwork—try to preserve as much volume as possible. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and

Flip the cake for an easy exit



Quick release. The cake may stick to the parchment in places, so use your fingers or a knife to free it.



Sugar coating. A dusting of confectioners' sugar keeps the cake from sticking to the work surface after it's flipped.



Just do it. The safest way to remove the cake without tearing it is to invert it, so take a deep breath and flip.

smooth the top with the spatula. Give the pan a gentle rap on the table to release any large air bubbles.

To bake and cool the cake—Put the pan in the middle of the heated oven and bake for 15 min. Turn the oven down to 325°F and let the cake cook another 5 min. The cake should look puffed, and a toothpick should come out clean.

Transfer the pan to a cooling rack. Moisten a clean, light (not terrycloth) dishtowel and wring it out completely so it's just barely damp. Cover the cake with the towel; the cake will sink slightly as it cools. Once the cake has cooled, slide the pan into the fridge until chilled, about 1 to 2 hours. This will help the trimming and assembly process.

To trim and assemble the cake—Prepare the filling (see the recipe at far right). Refrigerate the filling until ready to assemble.

Lift the towel off the cake. Carefully loosen the parchment from the pan and run a knife along the edges to free the cake from the parchment. Dust the top of the cake generously with confectioners' sugar. Lay a large piece of parchment, a large cutting board, or a dry dishcloth perfectly flat over the cake, pulling taut on both ends, and with a deep breath, invert the cake onto a work surface, long side facing you. Gently peel away the parchment.

With a large, sharp knife, carefully trim about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch off the edges to get an even rectangle. Use a slow sawing motion to avoid tearing the cake; a light coating of confectioners' sugar on the knife will prevent sticking. Cut the rectangle crosswise into four

even panels, each about 4x10 inches. Slide a long spatula or a long, wide knife, like a bread knife, under the first panel and carefully transfer it to a flat serving platter.

Tuck strips of parchment, plastic wrap, or foil under the edges of the cake layer and over the plate to keep the plate clean during assembly. Spread one-third of the filling evenly over the cake layer. Sprinkle one-third of the berries over the cream and press them in gently. Top with a second cake panel and another third of the cream and berries. Top with a third cake panel and the remaining cream and berries. Arrange the final cake layer on top and press gently. Dust the top of the cake generously with more confectioners' sugar. Drizzle the chocolate glaze over the top of the cake. Carefully slide the parchment strips away from the plate. Refrigerate the cake until about 15 min. before serving.

Rich Chocolate Glaze

The glaze must be thick but fluid when drizzled over the cake. It's best at room temperature; if it cools too far, warm it for a few seconds over low heat. *Yields about 1 cup glaze, enough for 1 cake and extra sauce.*

**1/4 cup heavy or whipping cream
1/4 cup light corn syrup
4 oz. semisweet chocolate, chopped
1 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 Tbs. whiskey or liqueur (optional)**

Trim the layers and start stacking



Both ends to the middle. Work around the edges of the cake to pull the parchment away. A thin layer of crumb may stick to the paper, but that's okay.



Measure twice, cut once. Trim the cake to get an even rectangle and then measure your four panels (each about 4x10 inches) before you cut them.

In a small saucepan, mix the cream with the corn syrup. Stir over medium heat until the syrup dissolves, and then bring the mixture to a full boil. Remove from the heat, and add the chocolate all at once. Let stand for 2 min. and then whisk until smooth. Whisk in the butter and then the alcohol, if using. Keep at room temperature if using the same day; otherwise, cover and refrigerate for up to four days.

Mascarpone Cream with Raspberries

If you can't find fresh raspberries, frozen will do, but they may weep a little in the cream as they sit. *Yields enough to fill one four-layer cake.*

**1 cup mascarpone cheese
1¼ cups heavy or whipping cream
3 Tbs. sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1½ cups fresh raspberries**

In a medium bowl, beat the mascarpone, cream, sugar, and vanilla with an electric mixer on low speed until blended. Increase the speed to medium high and beat until the cream is thick and firm peaks form (don't overbeat or the mixture will curdle). Keep refrigerated until ready to assemble. Reserve the berries for assembly.

Randall Price is an Ohio-born private chef and cooking teacher who divides his time between Paris, Burgundy, and the Auvergne. ♦



Even layers, billowy cream. This dessert is meant to be slightly rustic looking, so keep the cake layers straight but let the cream spread out in poufs and swirls.

Substituting canned tomatoes for fresh

Like most serious cooks, I lean toward a "fresh-is-best" philosophy when choosing most ingredients. There is, however, one notable exception: plum tomatoes. Aside from the few months each year when truly local, just-picked plum tomatoes are available (July through September in most regions of the United States), the best plum tomatoes you can buy are those in a can.

True, there are brimming bins of plum tomatoes year-round in many markets, but one taste is all you need to know that these pale, firm impostors have very little real tomato flavor. Sources at the California Tomato Growers Association explain that these so-called fresh tomatoes have been bred to be thick-skinned, tough, and dry enough to withstand the long voyage to markets across the country. They're picked green and then later gassed



with ethylene to promote ripening. Tomatoes destined for the canning plant, on the other hand, are picked ripe and red (meaning more real tomato flavor), and they're peeled and processed in very short order—one estimate is that less than six hours pass from when a tomato is picked until it's canned.

One 28-ounce can of tomatoes equals about 10 to 12 whole tomatoes, peeled (or about 2 pounds)

One 14½-ounce can of tomatoes equals 5 to 6 whole tomatoes, peeled (or about 1 pound)

cooked, tomato-paste-like flavor. All canned tomatoes come peeled—though you may find bits of peel in lesser quality brands.

Experiment to find a brand you like. The best will be packed full with whole, plump, evenly colored, bright red tomatoes with a good, sweet flavor and a minimum of juice. While the imported Italian brands carry the most prestige (and highest price tag), there are some excellent canned tomatoes from California, such as Red Pack, Libby's, and Muir Glen. Certainly canned tomatoes will never pass for fresh and should only be used in recipes like soups, stews, sauces, and other dishes where some amount of cooking takes place. Save the raw tomato recipes for summertime when you can get the real thing.

—Molly Stevens,
contributing editor

Photo: Scott Phillips

Dutch-processed vs. natural cocoa

Two types of cocoa powder are available to the home baker—Dutch-processed and natural—and I have long wondered if it really mattered which I used for what.

The first thing I learned in trying to answer this question is that natural cocoa tends to be a rather inconsistent commodity, varying in flavor, color, and intensity. In the mid-nineteenth century, a Dutch chocolate manufacturer came



Dutch-processed

up with a process by which he could better control and standardize the color and flavor of cocoa. The process, which involves washing the cocoa (before or after grinding) in an alkaline solution,

became known as Dutch-processing. The resulting cocoa is consistently darker in color, mellower in flavor, and less acidic than the natural (nonalkalized) powder. Some sources

claim that it is also more soluble in liquid, but in my tests making hot cocoa and pudding, I didn't notice much of a difference.

In tasting several brands of Dutch-processed cocoa

along side a few natural cocoas, I did find that Dutch-processed cocoas are indeed less bitter than natural ones. When baking, however, any bitterness from natural cocoa is generally mitigated by the sugar, butter, and other good things. In cakes and brownies, the Dutch-processed cocoas tend to produce moister and deeper colored baked goods—an advantage that makes it a favorite of many pastry chefs.



Storing potatoes properly

Lucky for us—a nation of potato lovers—one of our favorite foods is also a good keeper. In the right conditions, potatoes can be stored for two to three weeks.

Store them in the dark and always keep them cool and dry. Deep drawers, a basket inside a low cabinet, or a brown paper bag are good spots. Exposure to light is what turns potatoes green, so darkness is important. The green contains solanine, a mildly toxic alkaloid. Sprouts (also a sign

of deterioration) contain solanine, too.

The ideal storage temperature for potatoes is 45° to 50°F, but anything colder causes problems, so don't refrigerate them. When chilled, the starches start to convert to sugar, and the potatoes will taste odd and cook differently, as the sugars will also make the potatoes brown too quickly.

Even in the best conditions, don't plan to store potatoes for more than two to three weeks unless you have a proper root cellar that holds foods at around 50°F.

—M.S.

In baking recipes, you'll need to decide which cocoa to use based on the leavening the recipe calls for:

- ◆ Use natural cocoa—which has high acidity—in cakes made with baking soda; baking soda is an alkali and relies on an acid in the batter to produce leavening.
- ◆ Use Dutch-processed cocoa—which is much less acidic—in batters made with baking powder or eggs (or both), since these

are leaveners that don't depend on an acid in the batter to work.

Because of the importance of acidity and leavening, you may find some slight differences in the texture and height of your baked goods if you substitute one type of cocoa for another. In general, however, I found that only the recipes calling for 3/4 cup or more of cocoa powder were really affected.

—M.S.

How to make clarified butter

Making clarified butter at home is easy, and the results keep for months in the refrigerator. You might want to know the method if you're making the French Bread Rolls on p. 68, because the author prefers to use it in her recipe. But clarified butter is great for high-heat sautéing, too.

Melt unsalted butter gently in a sturdy saucepan (this works best with at least 1/4 pound of butter) until you see the butterfat separating. Most of the milk solids will drop to the bottom of the pan, and a layer of white foam will form on top. Remove the pan from the heat—gently, so you don't disturb the layers—spoon off the top layer of foam, and carefully pour off the pure butterfat into a clean container. Discard the milky residue from the bottom of the pan.

—Martha Holmberg, editor-in-chief

Making fresh breadcrumbs

When recipes call for fresh breadcrumbs, don't be tempted to use those powdery dry breadcrumbs sold in a can. You can make fresh breadcrumbs quickly and easily in a food processor (standard or mini) or in a coffee or spice grinder with whatever bread you have on hand (it doesn't have to be fancy—English muffins and pita bread make great breadcrumbs). You'll get the best results if your bread is slightly stale; very fresh bread can turn gummy in the machine. If it isn't stale, put slices of the bread in a warm (300° to 350°F) oven until slightly crusty. Rip the slices into pieces (remove the crusts first if your bread is very dense) and fill your processor or grinder about halfway full; any more can jam up the blades. Pulse until you get the size crumb you like. Make more than you need and store them in zip-top bags in the freezer; thaw them thoroughly before using. In a pinch, if you don't have a machine, rub slices or chunks of stale bread on a box grater.

—Susie Middleton, executive editor ♦

BY SHIRLEY O. CORRIHER

The way to great homemade stocks

Good stock is a real treasure for cooks. And while making your own takes a little time, it isn't difficult. You just put poultry, meat, or fish bones (or no bones, if making vegetable stock), aromatic vegetables, and herbs in a pot, add cold water to cover, and simmer. The proportion of ingredients can vary widely, and you'll still get good stock. But what does matter are good techniques—frequent skimming, simmering (not boiling), and proper cooling and storing. I'll describe the techniques here and explain why they work.

To start, choose the right cooking vessel. A tall, narrow pot is good because it maintains a nice, slow evaporation, so you don't have to constantly add more water.

Bony, jointy pieces make a stock gel

For full-bodied, gelatinous meat stocks, choose parts of the carcass that are rich in collagen. Collagen is present in connective tissue (joints and tendons) and in bones. As these parts simmer, the collagen denatures (unwinds) and combines with the water, forming gelatin.

Veal bones are great for stock because younger animals have more collagen than older ones with mineralized bones. As you would expect, parts with many joints and bones, such as chicken necks and backs, are particularly

good for making gelatinous stock. If there's meat clinging to the bones, all the better.

Blood on the bones tends to make a stock cloudy. Soaking them for 20 minutes before making stock will remove the blood.

For brown stocks, roasting the bones before simmering adds caramelized flavors. I roast the bones in a low-sided pan in a 400°F oven until the bones begin to brown. I then add chopped onions and keep roasting and turning them until the bones and onions are a deep brown.

Soft, ripe vegetables leach out more flavor

Choose aromatic vegetables like onions, leeks, celery, carrots, and possibly garlic. This is a good opportunity to dig into your vegetable bin for the oldest, ripest vegetables (soft is fine; moldy or decaying is not). These have softer cell walls and contribute the most flavor. They're sweeter, and many of the vegetables' insoluble pectic substances, which hold cells together,



have changed to soluble pectins, which dissolve and allow the cells to fall apart.

Start with cold water

Plunging vegetables into boiling water causes the surface starch cells to swell. This is a good thing when you want to keep flavor in the vegetables, but for stock you want to leach out the flavor, so cold water is best. I've demonstrated this by boiling two equivalent sets of vegetables side by side. One batch began in cold water, the other in hot. The stock with the cold-water start had a deeper color, and its flavor was more intense (as determined in a blind taste test).

A cold-water start is important for the bones, too. When you add bones to boiling water, some of the proteins immediately coagulate into very fine particles that cloud

INGREDIENTS FOR STOCK

For every gallon of finished meat or poultry stock, use:

- 8 lb. bones
- 6 qt. water
- 1 medium onion, or 1 small leek (including dark green part), coarsely chopped
- 1 medium carrot, coarsely chopped
- 1 large rib celery, coarsely chopped
- 4 sprigs parsley, 1 sprig thyme, 1 bay leaf, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cracked black peppercorns

For every gallon of finished fish stock, use:

- 10 lb. bones
- 5 qt. water (or 4 qt. water and 1 qt. dry white wine)
- 1 large leek (white part only), coarsely chopped
- 1 large rib celery, coarsely chopped
- 1 medium parsnip, coarsely chopped
- 4 sprigs parsley, 1 sprig thyme, 1 bay leaf, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cracked black peppercorns

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the stock. But when you heat them slowly in cold water, the proteins tend to coagulate in clumps and float to the top. Skim off these foamy coagulated proteins frequently to help prevent a cloudy stock.

Don't cover the pot. You want to encourage slow evaporation so flavors can intensify.

Simmer but don't stir

While the bones and vegetables are cooking, it's important to keep the liquid at a simmer, not a boil. Boiling will cause the fat and water to form an emulsion, producing a cloudy, greasy stock. And don't stir, as this, too, will cause some emulsification of fat and water. You want all the fat to float to the top when the stock cools so that it can be scooped off. Once the stock is completely defatted,

you can let it boil without fear of cloudiness.

Chicken stock is usually simmered for 3 to 5 hours, beef or veal stock for 8 to 12 hours, and fish stock for 30 minutes at most. The range of cooking times is mainly due to the size of the bones, but there's also a

nutrients and moisture make an ideal medium for bacterial growth. Refrigerating stock requires extra care because it's essential that it drops through the bacterial danger zone (40° to 140°F) quickly. One way to do this is to chill the stock in shallow, uncovered con-

pot with ice water. Stir the stock as it sits in the ice water so it cools down even faster. Then you can refrigerate the stock, remove the congealed fat layer on top, and store it in the refrigerator or freezer. (It's handy to freeze stock in smaller containers for when you need just a small amount.) The stock will keep for five to seven days in the refrigerator or three months in the freezer.

Always reboil stock before using it. I let it boil for about five minutes, enough time to get it to a rolling boil and kill any lurking bacteria. If bubbles appear in a refrigerated stock, it has fermented, so discard it immediately.

Shirley O. Corriher, a food scientist, is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking* and the author of *CookWise*. ♦

Starting with cold water makes a more flavorful, less cloudy stock.

difference in collagen. Fish bones aren't just thinner and smaller than chicken and beef, but fish collagen also decomposes much faster.

Cool quickly and completely

Most foods should be refrigerated immediately after cooking, especially stocks, whose

trainers—less than 3½ inches is good. In a deeper container, the stock would stay in the danger zone for hours.

A faster, more efficient way to cool stock quickly is to use an ice bath. Set a pot or metal bowl of strained stock inside a larger pot or in a stopped-up sink. Fill the larger

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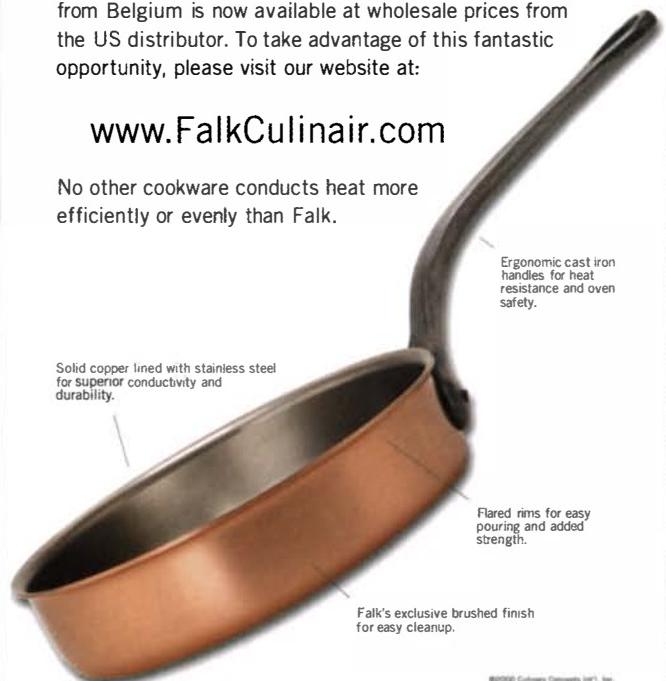
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SOURCES

At the Market

Order caviar from **Tsar Nicoulai** (800/952-2842; www.tsarnicoulai.com), or from **Caviarteria** (800/422-8427 or www.caviarteria.com). Order oysters from **Taylor Shellfish Farms**, 360/426-6178 or www.taylorshellfish.com.



Enjoying Wine

To find out about Vya domestic vermouth, call **Quady Winery** at 559/673-8068 or visit www.quadywinery.com.

Cornish Game Hens

For white truffle oil, try **Gourmet Mushroom Products** (800/789-9121; www.gmushrooms.com) or **Gateway Gourmet** (www.gatewaygourmet.com).

Duck Confit

The Long Island duck, also called Pekin duck, is the one most readily available in supermarkets in this country. If your local market doesn't carry duck, or you'd like to try one of the other varieties, here are some mail-order sources. The first three sources listed also sell prepared duck confit.

D'Artagnan Inc. sells Pekin, Muscovy, Mallard ducks, and Moulard legs, along with extra duck fat (800/327-8246 or www.dartagnan.com).

Joie De Vivre sells Muscovy ducks, legs, and duck fat (800/648-8854 or www.frenchselections.com).

Hudson Valley Foie Gras sells Moulard legs and duck fat (845/292-2500 or www.hudsonvalleyfoiegras.com).

Maple Leaf Farms sells White Pekin duck by mail. For a listing of local retailers, visit www.mapleleaffarms.com.

More Than Gourmet sells duck fat. For information on

where to buy, call 800/860-9385 or visit www.morethangourmet.com.

French Bread Rolls

Make sure you measure the inside dimensions of your oven before buying a baking stone or quarry tiles. You'll want as large a surface as possible while still leaving a 1-inch gap around the border for air circulation. (For more about baking stones, see *Fine Cooking* #41, p. 84.) Baking stones (sometimes called pizza stones or pizza bricks) can be round or rectangular and are usually about 1/2 inch thick.

Home Kitchen (877/480-9400; www.home-kitchen.com) carries a 16-inch round and a 14x16-inch rectangular stone, both \$32. **Sassafras Enterprises** (800/537-4941) sells two sizes of rectangular and round stones, ranging from \$16 to \$25. For unglazed quarry tiles, check your local tile shop. Specify unglazed, natural clay, lead-free tiles, and let the salesperson know that you intend to cook on them.

Chocolate-Chip Cookies

Penzey's Spices (800/741-7787; www.penzeys.com) carries a good selection of cinnamons, including all those mentioned on p. 74. Prices for a 1/4-cup jar range from \$1.59 to \$2.89.

Medaglia D'Oro instant espresso powder is sold in grocery stores; it's available from www.javacabana.com (listed under Euro Blends) and from www.maisonfood.com.

Cassoulet

Clay casseroles (also known as cazuelas) are available at **Broadway Panhandler** (212/966-3434) and **Sur La Table** (800/243-0852 or www.surlatable.com). For sources for duck confit and duck fat, see those at left.

Worth the Splurge

Many of the gift ideas featured can be found in well-stocked kitchen shops, or you can order them from mail-order sources, such as **A Cook's Wares** (800/915-9788; www.cookswares.com), **Sur La Table** (800/243-



0852; www.surlatable.com), **The Baker's Catalogue** (800/827-6836; www.bakerscatalogue.com), **Zabar's** (212/787-2000), or **Broadway Panhandler** (866/266-5927 or 212/966-3434; www.broadwaypanhandler.com).

The Salter electronic scale is available from Zabar's.

For the Wusthof hollow-ground santoku knife, try **A Cook's Wares** or **Broadway Panhandler**.

The Bourgeat 5 1/2-quart copper pan, called a covered sauteuse or buffet casserole, can be ordered from **A Cook's Wares**.

For a Tavolini kneading board, try **The Baker's Catalogue**; the 18x24-inch board is \$70 and the 24x28-inch board is \$80.

The 12-inch cherrywood salad bowl and utensils are available from **Williams-Sonoma** (877/812-6235; www.williams-sonoma.com).

You can usually buy an extra stand mixer bowl, whisk, and beater directly from the manufacturer. KitchenAid stand mixer parts can be ordered from **KitchenAid** (800/541-6390; www.kitchenaid.com) or from **A Cook's Wares**.

The 9 1/2-quart Le Creuset French oven can be ordered from **A Cook's Wares** or **Broadway Panhandler**.

The Italian stone mortar and wooden pestle can be ordered from **Sur La Table**.

The DeLonghi convection toaster is available from Zabar's.

Le Creuset spatulas are available from **A Cook's Wares** or **Zabar's**.

For the Polder clock/timer/thermometer, try **The Baker's Catalogue** or **Zabar's**.

A set of 1- and 1 1/2-inch pastry brushes can be ordered from **The Baker's Catalogue**, and a set of three are available from **Zabar's**.

The Taylor digital thermometer is sold in many kitchen stores, or



order it from **The Baker's Catalogue** or **A Cook's Wares**.

A set of three odd-size cup measures (2/3, 3/4, and 1 1/2 cups) is available from **Sur La Table** for \$19 and a set of four (1/8, 2/3, 3/4, and 1 1/2 cups) can be ordered for \$21.50 through **The Baker's Catalogue**. Odd-size spoons are available from **Broadway Panhandler**.

Chocolate Soufflé Cake

Kitchen parchment can be ordered from the **King Arthur Flour Baker's Catalogue** (800/827-6836; bakerscatalogue.com). A half-pound roll of parchment is \$9; single sheets are available in 2 3/4-pound packs for \$15.

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Photos: Amy Albert (caviar); all others, Scott Phillips.

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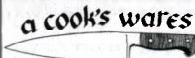
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3. Filing date: September 1, 2001. 4. Issue frequency: Bimonthly.
5. No. of issues published annually: 6. 6. Annual subscription price: \$29.95. 7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 63 S. Main St., PO Box 5506, Newtown, Fairfield County, CT 06470-5506. 8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business office of publisher: 63 S. Main St., PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. 9. Publisher: Sarah Roman. 63 S. Main St., PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Editor: Martha Holmberg. 63 S. Main St., PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Managing Editor: Susan Middleton. 63 S. Main St., PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. 10. Owner: The Taunton Press, Inc. 63 S. Main St., PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Stockholders owning or holding 1% or more of total amount of stock: Taunton, Inc., 63 S. Main St., PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. 11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders: None. 12. Not applicable. 13. Publication title: *Fine Cooking*. 14. Issue date for circulation data below: August/September 2001. 15. Extent and nature of circulation:

A. Total no. copies (net press run)	359,229	345,792
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2. Mail subscriptions	113,313	113,421
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	93.5%	93.1%

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NUTRITION INFORMATION

Recipe (analysis per serving)	Calories		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	total	Fats (g)				Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
	total	from fat				sat	mono	poly					
At the Market - pages 16-17													
Braised Kale w/Pancetta	350	160	18	39	18	3	11	3	10	480	7	per serving	
Cornish Hens - pages 44-49													
Glazed Roasted Game Hens w/Couscous	1260	600	106	49	66	22	25	13	350	1270	7	per serving	
Port-Spice Glaze	120	40	1	15	4.0	2.5	1.0	0.5	10	10	3	per 2 Tbsp.	
Orange-Spice Glaze	120	40	1	22	4.5	2.5	1.5	0.5	10	40	1	per 2 Tbsp.	
Maple-Brandy Glaze	130	40	0	21	4.0	2.5	1.0	0.5	10	5	0	per 2 Tbsp.	
Truffle-Scented Game Hens w/Mushrooms	1020	570	104	3	64	18	27	12	345	1510	1	per serving	
Game Hens Stuffed w/Wild Rice & Leeks	1060	540	104	22	60	20	22	11	345	1610	2	per serving	
Roasted Game Hens w/Tangerine-Herb Butter	1020	580	100	3	65	23	24	11	360	1500	0	per serving	
Rösti Potatoes - pages 50-52													
Crisp Rösti Potatoes	180	90	2	21	10	2	2	6	0	880	2	per serving, based on 4	
Root Vegetables - pages 53-57													
Celeriac & Yukon Gold Purée	160	50	4	25	5	3	2	0	15	680	3	per serving	
Parsnip & Leek Soup	230	120	4	23	14	2	9	1	0	400	4	per serving, based on 8	
Roasted Medley of Winter Roots	210	80	4	31	9	4	2	2	15	860	7	per serving	
Potato & Rutabaga Gratin w/Blue Cheese	500	380	8	27	42	26	12	2	145	850	4	per serving, based on 8	
Quick Recipes - pages 58-61													
Chicken Brochettes w/Apricot Glaze	400	50	46	41	6	1	3	1	115	440	1	per serving	
Sautéed Chicken Breasts w/Gremolata	390	90	54	13	10	1	5	3	130	730	1	per serving	
Hoisin Chicken Stir-Fry	350	150	32	19	17	3	6	8	65	710	4	per serving	
Roasted Nuts - pages 62-63													
Spicy Maple Walnuts	230	190	4	9	21	4	3	13	10	150	2	per 1/4 cup	
Malabar Pecans	240	230	3	4	25	4	13	7	10	290	3	per 1/4 cup	
Almonds w/Parmesan, Rosemary & Fennel	240	180	11	8	20	2	13	5	5	480	4	per 1/4 cup	
Duck Confit - pages 64-67													
Duck Confit	350	250	21	1	28	10	12	4	100	1140	0	per 4-oz. portion	
Crisp Duck Legs w/Sautéed Potatoes	920	650	20	47	72	24	34	9	125	1980	5	per serving	
Duck Confit Salad w/Great Northern Beans	350	160	17	34	18	4	11	2	25	680	9	per side serving	
Duck Confit Risotto w/Butter & Sage	500	230	18	45	25	12	10	2	60	920	1	per side serving	
French Bread Rolls - pages 68-73													
French Bread Rolls	270	30	9	53	3.0	1.5	1.0	0.5	5	670	3	per roll	
Chocolate Chips - pages 74-75													
Mocha Cinnamon Chocolate-Chip Cookies	110	60	1	13	6	4	2	0	15	15	0	per cookie	
Cassoulet Menu - pages 76-81													
Cassoulet	1210	670	62	72	74	27	34	9	175	1320	14	per serving	
Frisée Salad w/Roasted Beets	170	140	3	8	15	2	8	5	0	180	3	per serving, based on 8	
Winter Fruit Salad	140	0	1	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	per serving, based on 8	
Soufflé Cake - pages 86-91													
Chocolate Soufflé Layer Cake	630	380	9	57	42	26	9	3	235	130	5	per slice, based on 10	
Quick & Delicious - page 106													
Pasta w/Tuna, Tomato & Green Olives	540	190	24	64	21	3	13	3	10	800	4	per 1/4 cup	

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a

recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a

specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.

QUICK & DELICIOUS

BY JANET FLETCHER



A flavor-packed pasta made with canned tuna

The canned tuna that many of us turn to for salads or sandwiches makes a delicious pasta sauce for a quick supper. I finely mince the tuna and stir it into a thick tomato sauce seasoned with fennel seed, garlic, and green olives. You can pair it with penne or rigatoni (I like De Cecco brand) or with long strands like spaghetti or perciatelli.

For the best results, use only top-quality tuna packed in olive oil, such as the A's Do Mar brand from Portugal, or Italian brands like Progresso or Cento. I drain the olive oil from the can and replace it in the sauce with more flavorful extra-virgin olive oil. I also add a spoonful of extra-virgin oil at the end, off the heat, for a final burst of flavor. For the

Pasta with Tuna, Tomato & Green Olives

Keep a stock of canned tomatoes, canned tuna, and green olives around, and you can make this pasta at a moment's notice. Don't skip the fennel seed—it complements the tomatoes and tuna and pulls this sauce together. Adjust the garlic and red chile flakes to your taste, too, but be generous. Serves three to four.

4 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
2 to 3 large cloves garlic, minced
Generous pinch hot red chile flakes
3 Tbs. finely minced fresh flat-leaf parsley
2 cups very finely chopped canned tomatoes with their juices
1 tsp. fennel seed, crushed in a mortar or spice grinder
1 can (6 to 7 oz.) imported tuna packed in olive oil, well drained and very finely minced
1/3 cup pitted and quartered green olives
Salt
3/4 lb. dried penne, rigatoni, spaghetti, or perciatelli

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Heat 3 Tbs. of the olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over moderate heat. Add the garlic, chile flakes, and 2 Tbs. of the parsley and sauté briefly to release the fragrance of the seasonings. Add the tomatoes and fennel seed. Bring to a simmer, adjust the heat to maintain the simmer, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is thick and well blended, about 10 min.

Stir in the minced tuna and then the olives. Season with salt and remove from the heat while you cook the pasta.

Cook the pasta in rapidly boiling water. When the pasta is a few minutes away from being finished, return the tomato sauce to moderate heat and add enough of the hot pasta water—about $\frac{2}{3}$ cup—to thin the sauce to a nice consistency. Keep the sauce warm over low heat.

When the pasta is about 1 min. shy of *al dente*, scoop out and set aside $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the pasta cooking water and then drain the pasta. Return the pasta to the hot pot and stir in the sauce. Cook together over moderately low heat for about 1 min., stirring and adding some of the reserved pasta water if needed to thin the sauce. Take the skillet off the heat and stir in the remaining 1 Tbs. olive oil. Serve the pasta immediately in warm bowls, garnishing each portion with a little of the remaining parsley.

green olives, look for a variety that's not too salty or briny. I like Picholine or Lucques olives from France. Smack them with the side of a wide knife or cleaver, remove the pit, and then quarter or coarsely chop the flesh.

It's important to reduce the tomato sauce well before adding the tuna. It should be thick and dry, with no watery juices.

Later, to adjust the sauce to the right consistency, I add hot pasta water. (Italian cooks use this technique often to help the sauce coat the pasta evenly.) Cooking the pasta in the sauce for a final minute helps knit the two together.

Janet Fletcher is the author of *Pasta Harvest* and *The Cheese Course*. ♦

in pursuit of passion in the kitchen

seeks same for
long term relationship.
big mouth and capacity to
make lots of dough a plus.
must be low maintenance,
yet have sense of style.
looking for versatile
companion, accessible
morning, noon and night.



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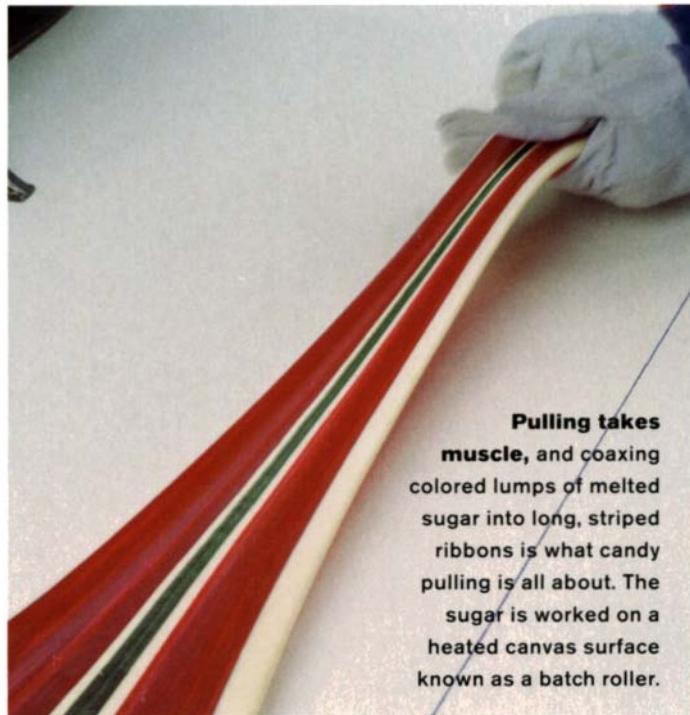


The Art of Ribbon Candy

When you open a box of Hammond's ribbon candy, the cinnamon and clove aromas that waft out are wonderfully and unmistakably old-fashioned. There's really no secret to it, claims Linda List, co-owner of Hammond's Candies in Denver, Colorado, just top-quality flavorings and working by hand. "People of a certain generation can remember really good-quality, handmade candy, and we're committed to continuing that tradition," she says. "The nicest thing they can tell us is that our ribbon candy is just like what their grandmother had in her candy dish."

With any production-type business, of course, there's the inevitable question of mechanization. "Resorting to machine pulling and motorized crimping means we'd lose the sheen and that slightly irregular handmade look that makes each piece slightly different," says List. "There's already too much in our lives that's cookie-cutter."

Sugar syrup is cooked to the "hard crack" stage, poured onto a steel slab to cool until workable, colored, and cut into portions. The hardening candy is worked with a steel bar and shaped into rows that will compose the stripes.



Pulling takes muscle, and coaxing colored lumps of melted sugar into long, striped ribbons is what candy pulling is all about. The sugar is worked on a heated canvas surface known as a batch roller.

Photos top left, Scott Phillips; all others, Michael Sullivan.

The pulled ribbons are fed into a crimper that shapes them into ribbon candy. This hand-cranked crimper is more than a hundred years old and still works perfectly.

